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# CONFESSION OF CHRIST.

BY THE

REV. WM. H. LEWIS, D.D.,  
RECTOR OF THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY,  
BROOKLYN, L. I.

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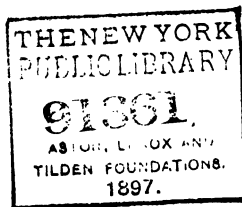


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## PREFACE.

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IN a volume of sermons for the Christian year, recently published by the author of this little work, no discourse upon the Sacraments, or Confirmation, was inserted, which was referred to as a defect by some, who in other respects spoke favorably of the volume. The omission was intentional, as the author had it in view to prepare something upon those subjects, similar to that which is herewith presented, in a smaller form, which might serve as a manual for candidates for any public Confession of Christ, and make its way where a larger book could not be circulated. It has been his aim to embody the results of many years' experience in dealing with neglecters of Sacraments, and in preparing persons to come forward to

them, and he trusts, that he has met a number of the minor and practical difficulties continually arising in such pastoral intercourse, many of which are not noticed in books of a similar character. May the work, in all its influences, aid in that Confession of Christ on earth, which He requires, and in gaining for the writer and reader the honor and blessedness of being Confessed by Christ before God and the Holy Angels.

RECTOR OF THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY

BROOKLYN, July 8, 1852.

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## SERMON I.

### CONFESSING CHRIST.

“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.”—*St. Matt. x. 32, 33.*

OUR text points us to the decisions of Christ in the day of Judgment. He will come in the glory of his Father, and with the holy angels, and he will then, in that assembly of all worlds, confess or deny those who have confessed or denied him here on earth; that is, he will own them as his people, or reject them for ever. What is there more desirable, than to be there acknowledged by him! What more fearful, than to be then by him denied!

A “confession,” or “profession” of Christ, in Scripture words of the same meaning, is a public acknowledgment of him and his religion in any of the ways which he has pointed out. We may confess him by a holy life, which speaks the power of his gospel over us,—by defending his truth when it is assailed,—by laboring for its advancement, or by our constancy at

the martyr's stake. And we may also confess him in the ordinances of his Church. In the changes which time creates in the meaning of words the last definition has become the prominent one ; so that, to speak of a profession of religion, or of a confession of Christ, is now generally understood to refer to that public acknowledgment of the Saviour which a person makes in Baptism, Confirmation, or the Lord's Supper. To be a Christian, was, in the apostles' days, as a matter of course, to be so sacramentally ; but in our own times all born in a Christian land are usually called Christians whether partakers in the Sacraments or not. Hence it has come to pass, that the great distinctive act by which we confess Christ is a sacramental one, and in common language we say that a person has made a profession of religion, when, in mature years, he has been baptized, confirmed, or admitted to the table of the Lord. All other modes of confessing Christ are merged in, and supposed to be included under the sacramental act.

Taking the term, a profession of religion, in this its modern use, I propose to dwell, in a series of Discourses, upon the obligations of such a confession of Christ, the mistakes which are common in regard to the duty, the qualifications for making a right profession, the several ways in which it is to be made, and upon various other points connected with the whole subject. May God's word and Holy Spirit guide and bless in all the inquiry.

In this first Discourse, we shall consider the obligations to a sacramental confession of Christ. It is necessary to state these, because with many, there is

a disposition to slight the outward profession of religion. If the heart be right, it is said, the outward form is a matter of little or no consequence; or, the ostentation and hypocrisy of those who do make a public profession is dwelt upon, or some other plea is urged as an excuse for neglecting the duty.

1. But in answer to these and similar cavils, we oppose, in the first place, our Lord's own positive and plain commands.

Christ intended Baptism and the Lord's Supper to be external badges of our discipleship, and to refuse to wear them would be as rebellious as for a soldier to refuse to wear the uniform of his regiment. The parting command of our Lord was, "go teach and baptize," and his dying mandate, "do this in remembrance of me." There are no plainer precepts in the Bible. No one is exempted from obedience to them. The apostles showed how they understood them, for they immediately baptized every convert, while all in their days met together for the breaking of bread in the Lord's Supper. And the Saviour himself set an example of obedience, for he was circumcised, kept the Passover, and was baptized by John, to teach us that thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Now if such commands, interpreted and sanctioned by such examples, cannot establish the duty, there is no argument that will avail, and he that will continue to speak lightly of a public sacramental profession in the face of such authority, must be left to the judgment of that Saviour against whose positive requirements he has presumed to rebel.



I know of but one way of evading this Scriptural argument, and that is by the sophism of the Friends. They assert that Christ intended the outward form of the Sacraments to continue only until the Spirit was given, that then the true Baptism was to be one of the Spirit, and the true Eucharist was to feed on Christ in the heart. But did he institute outward forms to last but to the day of Pentecost, only forty days after, when too there would be no opportunity in that interval of observing them? And besides, after the day of Pentecost, after the fullest effusion of the Holy Ghost, the apostles continued to baptize, and to minister the Lord's Supper; and St. Paul affirms that the latter was to show forth the Lord's death till he come. "Yes," replies the Friend, "till he come by his Spirit to take us off from outward forms, and lead us to their spiritual signification." If we may add so much to one text of Scripture, we can destroy the whole Bible; and further, the coming of Christ has no such meaning, but refers to his appearance at the Judgment. The dwindled condition of that sect, now almost extinct, shows the sad result of rejecting Christ's own Sacraments.

With this small exception, all the various bodies of Christians have retained Baptism and the Lord's Supper, nor was it ever heard that any individual eminent in piety was a neglecter of these Sacraments. Indeed, the worldly themselves confess their obligation, for how common it is for men who have slighted them all their lives, to desire on their death-beds to be baptized, or to receive the Holy Communion. You, my hearers,

however lightly some of you may now speak of these outward ordinances, may feel then, that you cannot meet Christ in peace in such an open contempt of his own appointments, and may anxiously ask for the Sacraments of the Church. It is a matter of regret that so many defer a reception of them until it becomes almost like the extreme unction of the Papists. How often have our prominent public men, who have during a long life filled offices of influence without any profession of religion, received the Sacraments in their declining years, or last sickness, and then been paraded through the papers as dying in the odor of sanctity and in the communion of the Church! Sorry should I be, from all my experience in similar scenes in humbler life, to risk my soul on such a late confession of Christ, or to expect upon the offering of such dregs of an existence, to be confessed by him in the great day. To confess Christ before men does not mean to do it in a sick chamber before one's own family and just at the last breath, but openly in the busy scenes of life, and to go forth as his avowed followers in the senate, the halls of justice, or the marts of commerce, honoring there our profession by a consistent life. There is one advantage, however, in such a late reception of Sacraments, whatever may be their benefit to the recipient, for it shows us, that in the judgment of men, yea of our greatest statesmen, they cannot be safely slighted. When, therefore, Christ has appointed a sacramental confession of himself, when the Church in all ages and places has complied with it, and even the worldly have sought by a late repentance to fit themselves for it,

surely no small degree of hardihood is required for any one, on any pretence, to oppose himself to such authority and arguments.

2. In the second place, we have not only the commands of Christ for a public confession, but there is an evident reasonableness in the requirement.

A sacramental confession of Christ, rightly made, is an effectual means of extending and perpetuating the gospel. There is as much difference in effectiveness between Christians banded together by Sacraments and without them, as between soldiers under the discipline and array of regiments, or acting singly and alone. You may say, "religion is a matter between me and my God—the world has nothing to do with it, nor any right to know my opinions on the subject, and if my heart is right, the outward form of profession is nothing." But God has judged otherwise. You might as well affirm that if the inner works of a clock are right, it matters not whether it has any hands to show their correctness. The very design of it was not only to run truly, but to guide others by its outward manifestations. So religion is intended not only for our own good, but for the good of the world. God may read our hearts, as the maker may the internal movements of a clock, but the world at large can only know us by our outward professions and conduct, as they read the clock by its dial. Accordingly our Saviour expects us to be open in our profession, as a city set on a hill, or as a light upon a candlestick that giveth light to all in the house.

The common language of men shows the wisdom of

Christ's appointments. What do you mean when you say a professor of religion ought not to do this or that,—or again, I can do this because I make no profession, or I can go to such a place of amusement, but I do not think it looks well in a professing Christian to be seen there? We do not admit your reasoning, for no man is free to sin, whether he professes religion or not. But you mean, that there is a certain influence for good which a professing Christian enjoys that he is not lightly to sacrifice, and that he is in a higher position of usefulness and duty than other men occupy. Then according to your own showing, a consistent professor of religion has an advantage over others for good—for you expect more from him—and therefore Christ has rightly demanded that profession from us. Set aside all the inconsistent Church members you may know, and fix your thoughts on such as really are what they profess to be, and you must allow that these last have a decided advantage for usefulness over all others. Then it is your duty to be one of those consistent members of the visible Church; and if you are not, Christ will hold you accountable for all the evil you do, or the good you leave undone by your neglect. Every man who turns away from Sacraments encourages others to do the same, and that just in proportion to his weight of character for intelligence and morality, while every consistent recipient of them wins others to obedience by his example. And the very fact that one has gone forward to them renders him more likely to endeavor to exert an active influence for good, for seldom does one who makes no profession take any

zealous part in sustaining religion, except perhaps in its mere externals, or in seeking the salvation of his fellow-men.

3. Consider again the influence of a public profession of religion upon the family.

With the little child a father and mother are the wisest and best persons in all the world. Their words are oracles, their example law. Now what must be the effect upon your children if they see you turning away from the Sacraments of Christ until they are twelve or sixteen years of age? You may say to them, Do as I say, not as I do; but you will find that your contempt for God's ordinances has instilled a lesson into them which all your precepts cannot countervail. Children are likely to do as their parents do, not as they say. Facts show that our young communicants are generally children of communicants. Look, then, parents, on that flock of young immortals committed to your care, and say whither you mean to lead them. You must go before them if you would guide them aright, even as a shepherd cannot send his sheep by word of mouth to some fair distant pasture while he proceeds another way to amuse himself, but must go before them in the path. You will find, too, that you will speak with more confidence and freedom to your little ones in religious matters when you have yourself professed religion. It will take off a weight of self-condemnation that now seals your lips in silence, and you will also feel more liberty in commencing and maintaining family devotions. Sharp young eyes are upon you; close observers are watching you in your

homes to imitate you. Let them not learn from you, as one of their early lessons, to walk down these aisles when others are going up to God's altar to participate in the holy Sacraments of His Church.

4. The public profession of religion operates also as a wholesome restraint upon ourselves.

Often have I been delighted to see the youthful member of the Church setting himself resolutely against that which others of his own age indulged in to their final ruin, because, having made a profession of religion, he felt that it would be inconsistent in him to do as they did. At our best state we are weak and wavering in our steps, but a sacramental confession seems like a staff in our hands to strengthen us; and surely we need all of outward stay as well as of inward grace that we can have in our pathway through this world of temptation. Every one can see that to go regularly to the Lord's table, amid all the solemnity which usually surrounds it, the previous preparation for it, and the observation it draws upon us, must have a powerful tendency to restrain from sin and excite to duty. It does have that effect. Notwithstanding the railing of the worldly against church members, in some instances too well deserved, we yet fearlessly assert that the tone of morality and piety is far higher among them than among the non-professing—that fewer of them fall into gross crimes, and that in all the great charities which bless mankind, they are ever foremost. Low as their attainments are, and unhappy as some individual exceptions may be, yet we dare affirm that, taken as a body and compared with the same number

in the same community who make no profession, the advantage in all that is good and useful will evidently be with those who have named the name of Christ. The assertion is not made in the spirit of boasting, but of self-defence, and if it be well founded, then practical results show the wisdom of requiring a sacramental confession of Christ.

5. We may add that the despiser of Sacraments has no right to expect the grace of God in the use of any other means.

We need not tie the grace of God to Sacraments, nor exalt sacramental grace as if there were no other, but he who can habitually and wilfully disobey any command, even the least, much more a command so solemn as that on which each Sacrament rests, has no right to expect a blessing in any other way from God. The Divine favor flows to us through appointed channels, and according to that appointment must we seek it. He who is not baptized is not within that Church to which all the promises are made, and of course has no covenant claim to them, but if he receives them, receives them as the heathen may do, through the uncovenanted mercies of God. We may possibly be saved without Sacraments, but we have no promise that we shall be, while in drawing near to them in God's own required way, we have the covenant assurance of salvation.

In conclusion, I would urge the prayerful consideration of these reasons for a public profession in the Sacraments upon all who have not made it. Do not presume to speak slightly of the duty unless you sup-

pose yourself wiser than Christ. Do not indulge in the vulgar cavils at the inconsistencies of professing Christians, for that shows a wicked heart and a weak head—a wicked heart, because a good man would only grieve over the faults of Christians; and a weak head, because the misconduct of a few is no argument against our religion, nor excuse for your neglect of its requirements. There is but one position which any man neglecting Sacraments can occupy with any shadow of reasonableness, and that is the position of him who says, I know most fully that it is my duty to confess Christ in them, I wish that I could do it, but I am so great a sinner that I cannot. That last standing place must also be taken from you, for if you are a sinner, look to Christ for grace, for strength, for the robe of righteousness, for all you need. If any man say, I am a grievous sinner, and therefore am afraid to come, wherefore then do ye not repent and amend? When God calleth you, are ye not ashamed to say ye will not come? When ye should return to God, will ye excuse yourselves and say ye are not ready? Consider earnestly with yourself how little such feigned excuses will avail before God. Nothing is demanded of us in that public Sacramental confession but what God will give us grace to perform, and no one in the day of judgment will be able to ward off the fearful doom of being denied by Christ by the plea of inability to confess Him to his acceptance before men. Then will rest upon him, as now does in every day, the awful guilt of needlessly, wilfully, and habitually neglecting and contemning Christ's holy Sacraments.



## SERMON II.

## RENUNCIATION OF THE DEVIL AND HIS WORKS.

“ For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.”—1 *John* iii. 8.

**W**E have considered the obligations to a public sacramental confession of Christ.

The point next in order will be, the qualifications for making it, and as the answers given in our Church service by those who are to be baptized include every essential requisite to a profession of religion, I shall take them as the basis of my plan and remarks.

Our first subject then will be, the renunciation of the devil and all his works.

1. Scripture teaches that there is an evil spirit called Satan or the Devil. There is but one being to whom this name is applied in the word of God, although there are under him a multitude of inferior spirits of darkness; for where our translation speaks of devils in the plural form, the word in the original is very different from that applied to their great leader. All, however, with their prince were once holy angels in heaven, but rebelling through pride, were cast down to hell. Satan then became the successful tempter of our first parents, and having drawn them away from God, they and all their posterity came under the dominion of the evil one; so that now every man is by nature the child and servant of the devil. From

this bondage the Son of God came to set us free, and those whom he reclaims make a change of masters, just as a subject does when he gives up his citizenship in one country and takes the oath of allegiance in another.

By the requirement of our Church, this renunciation is to be solemnly and publicly made. A similar usage has prevailed in the Christian Church from the beginning, grounded probably upon St. Peter's reference to the answer of a good conscience in Baptism, and not improbably upon apostolic example. Tertulian, speaking of Baptism, says, "We renounce the devil, and his pomps and angels." And Origen says, "The baptized renounces the evil Spirit and all his damnable pomps." Renunciation of the devil, the world, and the flesh, is with great propriety made the first act and profession of the Christian life in our Prayer Book, for it opens the way to all that follows; nor can we look to Christ without turning our backs upon his enemies. As we are baptized into the Trinity of heaven, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for our salvation; so should we renounce the trinity of hell, the devil, the world, and the flesh, seeking our destruction.

Before you can make a public confession of Christ, then, you must have a deep conviction of the existence of the devil, and of his power over you by nature, with an earnest desire to break away from his dominion. How can you utter that solemn vow of renunciation, if, with many, you believe that there is no devil except a man's own evil tempers, or speak lightly and jeer-

ingly of his agency? Satan, as presented to us in the Scriptures, is no creature of imagination or superstition. Our Lord found him a deadly foe. And the deeper one's experience in the divine life, the more firmly will he be persuaded that he has a subtle, invisible, powerful adversary always watching for his destruction, and sure to prevail unless Christ deliver from his wiles. To turn men from the power of Satan unto God, is the work of the ministry. To recover themselves from the snares of the devil, is the business of those who are led captive at his will. And to destroy the works of the devil, was the end for which the Son of God was manifested.

Your first self-inquiry then, before making a public profession, should be, whether you are truly persuaded of the power of Satan over you by nature, and long to break from his bondage. Do you feel that there is such an enemy to your peace, working in you by his temptations, and leading you into captivity; and are you distressed and alarmed by his suggestions, so that you flee to Christ for rescue from his thrall? If so, you are prepared to stand up in the great congregation, intelligently and solemnly to say, I renounce the devil.

2. But the answer in Baptism more particularly specifies, that the *works* of the devil are to be renounced. What are these works? In general, we might reply, all sin; for sin in every shape is of the devil. Hence in many of the early formularies the candidate only said, I renounce the devil, as if that comprehended wickedness of every kind.

It is, however, a common and scriptural distinction to divide sins into three classes, as we are led to them by the devil, the world, and the flesh. Satan's temptations address themselves to us chiefly through the intellect and imagination; the world's enticements allure through outward objects; and the flesh assails us through the appetites of our lower or sensual natures. Thus pride would be a temptation of the devil, covetousness of the world, and intemperance of the flesh. Following this classification, let us look at some of the works of the devil which we are to renounce.

3. Among them we may give the first rank to all those sins which involve an undue exaltation and preference of self. This is peculiarly the sin of the devil. We call it *pride*, when it displays itself in inordinate self-esteem; *self-conceit*, when it plumes itself upon particular excellencies; *vanity*, when built upon personal accomplishments; it is *ambition* in its loftier flights, *haughtiness* when contemptuous towards others, and *envy* when aught in others conflicts with self-importance. All these are but varied manifestations of the spirit of self-exaltation, included in Scripture under the one term *pride*, the gospel opposite of which, in its every form, is humility. Pride we are told was the condemnation of the devil, and therefore the first sin which stained God's holy universe. It was the sin of our first parents when they aimed to be as gods, and that to which Satan presumed to tempt even the Saviour himself when he showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. It is the deep-rooted and damning sin of our depraved nature, break-

ing forth in every act, polluting every thought, the hardest and the last to be overcome of all our indwelling corruptions.

This work of the devil you must renounce, in making a public confession of Christ. The Saviour taught us this, when he placed a little child before him, and said, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. It is a sin which does not grieve an unconverted man. It is congenial to his soul. He loves to magnify self; —to build in imagination air castles of self-exaltation, to exalt self by riches and honors, to mingle vain-glory and ostentation in all his acts, even in his charities and forms of religion, are all things in which he takes pleasure, scarcely thinking of their sinfulness, or striving against their indulgence. But he whose eyes have been opened by the Spirit, discovers the loathsome nature of this sin, sees that it is putting self in the place of God, is conscious how it runs through all his actions and betrays itself in a thousand forms, leading him to glory in intellectual endowments, personal accomplishments, dress, equipage, riches, family descent, or office, to take pride in supposed morality and piety, or the fancied excellence of prayers, and even in his imagined lowliness. I can do nothing, the anguished penitent exclaims, but this foul spirit of self-seeking and self-complacency is mingled with it. How loathsome must I be in the sight of Him who sees all the workings of my heart, whose glory ought to be first in my desires and aims! And as this conviction of the sinful pride of corrupt nature is fastened upon the

awakened soul, it leads to continual repentance and renunciation of it, and fighting against it. No man can be a true Christian until he is made lowly in his own eyes, and willing to become little in the eyes of the world for Christ's sake. This clinging to self, panting for self-exaltation, and aiming at our own glory, is the work of the devil, for which he was cast out of heaven, and which will for ever bar our entrance there unless it be renounced. Are you convinced then of the deep-rooted pride and selfishness of your hearts? Do you see this spirit breaking forth in every thing, and the more you know of yourself, do you perceive the more of it within you? Do you loathe it? Do you desire unfeignedly to be self-abased, and to have Christ set up in your heart? Do you say,

"Strip me of the robe of pride,  
Clothe me with humility."

If so, then you are here again prepared for a public confession of Christ. And let me urge you to watch especially against this sin. Strive that every thing in your dress and ornament be consistent with Christian humility. Avoid thinking of self, speaking of self, studying to bring self into notice and honor, resenting little affronts against self, and, renouncing all the vain things which the proud heart naturally loves, seek to be lowly in your own eyes, and that Christ may be magnified in you and by you.

4. Another of Satan's works is deceit in its every form.

The devil is called in Scripture the father of lies. His progeny includes, not merely lies specially so called, but all the grosser delusions of Satan, such as idolatry, witchcraft, fortune-telling, pretended miracles, lying legends, systems of false doctrine, as well as falsehood in conversation, hypocrisy in religion, fraud and overreaching in trade, and such too as hollow compliments, flattery, affectation, and every minor shade and shape of deceit with which the world is filled. Satan is the author of all delusion and error. He works in darkness, and blinds the eyes of those who are lost.

Now the opposite of this work of the devil, is, truth. God is the God of truth. He dwelleth in light. His religion is light, and error and delusion can no more dwell with it than midnight can with noonday. The idolator under the power of this religion casts away his idols. The man who has denied Christ's divinity and atonement, or the future punishment of the wicked, the moment he receives the love of the truth in his heart, drops, without an argument, all that he has before contended for. He who has conducted his worldly business with the overreaching and trickery of worldly men, feels, as a Christian, that he can do so no more. He renounces the hidden things of dishonesty, and desires whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are of good report.

Here, then, brethren, is another test of your meetness for a public confession of Christ. Do you aim at sincerity and truth in every thing, in your business,

your conversation, your manners, your religion and worship? A real Christian is a truthful character, open, transparent, and guileless. The hollow forms of a heartless world he despises, and dreads the mockery of appearing before God or man for what he is not. Ye who would confess your Saviour, resolve to be such Christians. Let your motto be simplicity and godly sincerity. Be girt about with truth, and have on the breastplate of righteousness. Aim to lay yourselves open before God in all your approaches to him, without the least disguise, desiring to know and obey all the truth. And among your fellow-men be content to appear unpretending and simple. Oh it is refreshing to turn from one of the made up characters of this world—a lump of affectation—full of deceit and vanity, false in speech, in compliments, in promises, in protestations of friendship, in dress, in looks, in ornaments, and to meet with a true Nathaniel, in whom is no guile, who renounces deceit in every form, and all false ways utterly abhors.

5. The excitement of the darker and malignant passions of our nature is another work peculiarly Satan's.

Anger, hatred, jealousy, and revenge, leading to detraction, slander, and murder, or breaking forth in bitter words, revilings, profanity and blasphemy, may all be included under this head; and the opposite of all is a spirit of meekness and love. You cannot be prepared to confess Christ before men if you habitually give way to evil tempers within, or to their outward manifestations. No matter how strong a man's natural passions



may be he will feel, as a Christian, that he cannot indulge them, that he has a ceaseless warfare to wage against them, and must seek to become meek and loving like his Lord. Some professing Christians do, indeed, break forth habitually into paroxysms of anger, perhaps with oaths and curses, and then think coolly to justify themselves on the plea of their infirmities and great excitement, or strong natural tempers, and that they are after all, as Christians, of like passions with other men. A Christian may, indeed, like Peter, fall once, perhaps, into such a sin, but if he does he will not excuse it, but like Peter, go out and weep bitterly for it. If you know yourselves to be naturally irascible, prone to break out into fretfulness, or wrath, or open maledictions, or to indulge in smothered resentments, you will see, if you have a Christian spirit, that all this is inconsistent with a confession of Christ, that you must repent of and renounce these works of the devil, and be clothed with the meekness and gentleness, the loving spirit, long-suffering, and forbearance of your Lord.

Other sins might be mentioned as among the works of the devil, which, with their author, we are to renounce, but these are the chief. Renouncing the natural pride of our hearts, deceit and lies, and all evil tempers, we are to seek to be lowly, truthful and sincere, meek and loving. He who has attained to humility, guilelessness, and charity, or is striving earnestly and with some success to attain to them, has so far the spirit of a Christian, and is prepared for a public confession of Christ.

You will see from this enumeration, and we have but just commenced our survey of the duties of the Christian life, that it is no light thing to be a Christian. God forbid that I should ever describe it as an easy matter, or draw you into a public confession of Christ by lowering his requirements. Recruits for war may be gained by golden lures and intoxicating snares, to desert or murmur when they awake to actual hardships, but we want every one who enlists under Christ's banner to do it with a full understanding, what it is to be Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end. We warn you beforehand that you must subdue the pride, deceitfulness, and evil passions of your natures, that this will cost you many prayers and tears, much watchfulness and toil; and that your chief conflict will be with inward depravity excited into ceaseless action by that foe who knows full well how to stir it up. But what then? Do pride, deceit, and evil tempers *indulged*, make us happy? If we yield to Satan does that secure peace? Is there not greater peace in renouncing him? Could we have our souls made lowly, truthful, and meek, would it not be a blessed change? Think of this. Think what a master you are under by nature, and what misery and inquietude to be under such bondage for ever, and you will be ready to say, I renounce the devil and all his works, I loathe his dominion, I will not be led by him. No, let me take Christ as my master, and daily sit at the feet of him who was meek and lowly in heart, that I may find rest to my soul.

## SERMON III.

### RENUNCIATION OF THE WORLD.

“Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God.”—*St. James* iv. 4.

**T**HE baptismal renunciation of the devil and all his works has been considered, and next in order in our course is the promise to renounce the pomps and vanity of this wicked world, with all covetous desires of the same.

Our present subject is one of great difficulty, because it is so hard to define what worldliness is. We are placed in the midst of the world, and to a certain degree permitted to enjoy it, but are not taught precisely how far we may go; while, to overstep due bounds is fatal. Yet God has laid before us some marks and rules by which those who are anxious to know and do his will may be guided aright. Let us seek that guidance. Surely every true-hearted Christian, as he listens to the solemn words of our text, will earnestly say, Let me know the truth, let me not be a friend of the world and an enemy of God.

1. We promise, in our baptismal vow, to renounce the vain pomp and glory of the world.

This does not require us to stand aloof from all its political concerns, or to refuse its titles, honors, and offices. Some Christians sin by withdrawing themselves too much from civil affairs. They plead that

they cannot bear the strifes, burdens, and obloquy of office, and that they loathe the spirit of those engaged in politics, and hence it often happens that the best men take no part in administering government, or in selecting others to administer it, but leave all in the hands of the worthless and incompetent. This is not Christian renunciation of the world. It is love of ease. Every Christian is bound to seek the welfare of the people among whom he dwells, and to refuse to participate in politics, because of their strifes and odium, is not to follow the example of that Lord who never shrank from duty because of its attendant hardships and sacrifices.

Nor does renunciation of the world require us to decline its titles and distinctions. Some have supposed, because Christ forbade his disciples to be called Rabbi, that all honorary appellations are inconsistent with Christian humility. But the spirit of such renunciations may often be that of the old cynic, who exclaimed as he strode over rich carpets, "I trample on the pride of Plato;" to which the reply was, "Yes, with greater pride." The sacred writers themselves give the customary titles of honor to those whom they address, and of course understood our Lord to forbid only their servile or idolatrous use.

It is, then, the eager craving after worldly honors, and valuing them above the honor that cometh from God, that we are to renounce. How much are some men absorbed in the pursuit of political distinction—how keenly do they feel any slight or failure in its attainment—how elated are they by success—how proud

fond man is dressed in a little brief authority. Nor is it only in such great contests as involve a crown, a presidential chair, or a mitre, that this unholy ambition is displayed, but for every petty office, down to that of a doorkeeper or gravedigger, there is the same struggle and rivalry, the same pride in success and mortification in failure as is elsewhere seen on a grander scale.

Now, here, renunciation of the world implies that we value above all things the favor of God, and earthly elevation chiefly as a means of honoring and serving him. A true Christian will go earnestly forward in the way of duty, content to let honor and office seek him rather than seeking them, or if he seek them, as he sometimes lawfully may, coveting earnestly the best gifts, it will be as a means of enlarged usefulness,—not greatly elated if they fall to him, nor greatly depressed if popular will or caprice take them from him,—finding God his better portion when he reaches the highest earthly rank, and finding that God can still satisfy, if left unhonored and neglected by the world. If you thus regard earth's distinctions, whether laden with all it has to bestow, its crowns, its robes, its badges; or wearing not one of them, you might equally and in either case, stand at God's altar and say, "I renounce the world."

2. Under the pomps and vanities to be renounced may be also included extravagance in dress and ornament, in furniture, equipage, and style of living.

All outward adornment cannot be wrong, for those saints of Scripture who are proposed for our patterns

in such matters, put on fine raiment, gold, and jewelry. Yet there is danger of excess, and the two great apostles of the Jew and of the Gentile have not thought it beneath them to give minute directions in regard to female apparel in 1 Tim. ii. 9, and 1 Pet. iii. 3. The plea is sometimes urged, that expenditures upon a profuse scale for dress and ornament are justifiable, because they help the poor who are engaged in manufacture. It is an ingenious excuse, but I doubt whether charity to the poor has much to do with it, or whether our Lord would so excuse one whose personal wardrobe would clothe perhaps fifty poor families. All vices give a subsistence to some; but if they were abandoned, the trades which they sustain might also be abandoned for that which was of less doubtful utility. The sin of the present day is extravagance and luxury, and it is often a matter of wonder when we look upon some professing Christians, what they meant by that part of their baptismal vow in which they renounce the pomps and vanities of the world. What do they give up? In all that relates to dress and furniture they go as far as the most worldly, or as far as their means will allow, and perhaps a little farther; what then did they intend in that act of renunciation?

- Not only is such indulgence inconsistent with Christian deadness to the world, but it often draws down temporal ruin. When I see costly palaces built and furnished on the most expensive scale, with every thing to correspond in the style of living, I expect in due time to hear of bankruptcy, for the man is an unfaithful steward, using for his own pride that which

God gave him for better purposes, and therefore God will turn him out of his stewardship, or if he be permitted to go on in his waste of talents till death, heavy will his reckoning be at the bar of God. Often have the members of a household, when their fortunes came down with a crash, exclaimed, why did not the head of our family tell us that his affairs were straitened, and that we were living beyond his means, for then we could have retrenched and saved a thousand needless expenditures? Little pity will they deserve or get, for they who waste deserve to want, nor has any one, however ample his means, a right to dissipate them upon self-indulgent follies. Immense injury is done to the cause of Christ by neglect of this part of the baptismal vow. The worldly, as we call them, though the term seems almost ludicrous in its application, look on the excesses to which professors go, and say, this is a very easy, self-indulgent religion,—these Christians certainly contrive to bring a good many of what we should call pomps and vanities into their permitted list,—either they are wrong, or else this distinction between the worldly and Christ's people is all imaginary.

I urge you, then, if thinking of a public confession of Christ, to have in your mind some definite idea of what is meant by renouncing the pomps and vanities of the world. No one can prescribe for you where the line must be drawn, or how you should dress or live, but there is a limit beyond which to go is inconsistent, is injurious in its influence, and will prove that you love the world and are an enemy of God. I exhort to

no puritanical preciseness, but if you are a true Christian, the thought will continually arise, I cannot do this which I see others do, or I cannot indulge in that because of my holy profession. Though you affect not a sanctimonious singularity, you will feel that a Christian is to be a Christian in every thing, in the outward adorning of the body as well as in the arrayal of the soul. As good a rule as can be given, is that familiar one, to attract no observation by either extravagance or meanness, perfection being attained when, as we sometimes say of dress, we did not notice what others had on, or of furniture, we did not observe what was in the rooms.

3. The sinful pleasures of the world are also excluded by our baptismal vow.

In their grosser forms we can easily decide which are to be renounced. The House of Bishops of our Church, some years ago, expressed their unanimous opinion regarding gaming, amusements involving cruelty to the brute creation, and theatrical entertainments, that they were of licentious tendency, and withdrew the affections from spiritual things, and that the people ought to be warned against them. And it is remarkable, that our American congress, in 1778, recommended the several states to take the most effectual measures for the suppressing of theatrical entertainments, horse-racing, gaming, and such other diversions as are productive of idleness, dissipation, and a general depravity of manners. To such testimony nothing need be added.

When we descend to other pleasures, such as large



fashionable parties and private balls, every Christian should seek to do that which, after prayerful inquiry, seems most consistent with his profession. My own opinion is decidedly against them. The cost of one such entertainment is sometimes enough to sustain a missionary for a whole year, and often exceeds what those who make it bestow annually in charities; while the fruits of it are rivalry, self-display, envy, and evil-speaking, with very little of that kindly feeling which a more private, social intercourse produces. The common remark concerning such parties is, that they are the most thankless offering to friends that one can make; few whose good opinion is to be valued go to them willingly, while the worthless go to feed, criticise, and condemn. And if Christians proceed so far, others will be led on to greater display, or else will say, that as they cannot afford to bring worldly amusements into their house, at such a cost, they will seek them at a cheaper rate in places of public resort. I always regret to have my opinion asked upon such matters, because it seems to indicate a want of piety in those who inquire, with a disposition to go as far as they can in doubtful cases; and they ask in hopes to be confirmed in their purposes by their pastor's approval. I may be told, that many ministers and Christians sanction such pleasures. That may be, for ministers have been guilty, in some cases, of indulgence in every sin or sinful pleasure that can be named, and those of a better order who lend their names to the frivolities of the world, little know how their example is quoted. It may be said that dancing, and such like

amusements, prevent a great deal of frivolous conversation ; but one evil is not to be cured by another. And some have asserted that they can have just as pious feelings in a theatre or ball-room as at the Lord's table ; to which there is nothing to be replied but, that is wonderful ! A few simple questions will show one anxious to know his duty, what it is. Can such things be indulged in consistently with the rule of doing all to the glory of God ? Would the Saviour have sanctioned them by his presence ? If Christians go so far, will not the irreligious be encouraged to greater excesses ? Do you meet, amid such scenes, those whom you judge to be most eminent for piety, and most successfully laboring for Christ ? If, as in the sight of God, you can answer these questions so as to allow indulgence, then go on. I cannot. It may be that I am wrong. But I have seen families brought up to engage in works of charity, and to find their pleasures in home enjoyments, in music, and literature, and the members thereof seemed happy, respected, and useful, nor did it ever cost them one sigh of regret that they had never beheld the inside of a theatre, never mingled in the dance, never sought the amusements of a gay world. Such families let us seek that ours may be. Such Christians, my young friends, do you aim to be, and you may then say, I renounce the vanities of this wicked world.

It is to be regretted that Christian parents often nourish in their children, while very young, a love of worldly amusements which in later years they mourn over, but cannot restrain. We see miniature parties

with the same flutter of expectation and preparation as in those for persons of maturer years, the same attention to dress and ornament,—protracted with the dance to the midnight hour, and followed by the usual effects of dissipation. Better for soul and body would it have been had such babes been put to sleep at the wonted time, after the offering of their little prayers to God. Many of us were educated to think that all the early years to sixteen or eighteen should be devoted to study, and that the young should not mingle much in company. But now children are introduced to scenes at six or ten, into which their own parents never went till twice their age. Whether the change will improve them in useful learning, filial obedience, or piety, remains to be seen. If they grow up to love these things more and more, and at last become wholly absorbed in them, and incur in the world of woe the doom of those who are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, whose work will it be, Christian parents, but your own? Take care that you do not educate them to love the pomps and vanities of the world, after standing at God's altar and in their name renouncing them.

4. The covetous desires of the world are excluded by the vow of renunciation, and upon this point, in the last place, we will briefly dwell.

It is our duty to attend to the wants of our families, to be industrious, and frugal, nor is there any sin in increasing wealth by lawful means; but all this must be done in such a way as to give God the uppermost place in our hearts. No man is prepared to say, I renounce the world, who does not feel assured that

he loves God and his service more than worldly gains. The true Christian will engage diligently in business because it is his duty so to do, not from a sordid love of money ; of all that is intrusted to him he will consider himself but the steward,—losses will not greatly depress, nor acquisitions elate him,—he will not affect to despise riches, knowing that rightly employed they are a means of enjoyment and usefulness, nor will he set his affections upon them, for his treasure is in heaven. If God and his service are thus supreme in your hearts, you are prepared to stand here and say before your Saviour and your fellow men, “ I renounce the world.”

Very likely much that has been advanced upon these several points will awaken cavil, and be censured even by some professing Christians. But when we think of our text, and the assertion, that if any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him—when we remember the solemn baptismal vow, and the evil that is done to the cause of Christ by the worldliness of his professed people—when we recollect how dead to the world eminent Christians have ever been, and how little a man will be profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul, we shall feel that the views now advanced are not too strict, or certainly that they lean to the side of safety.

But indeed, my brethren, if the love of Christ be shed abroad in your hearts, you will find it no sacrifice to make such a renunciation as this, for

Earthly pleasures fade away  
When Jesus is revealed.

Fervent love of the world and of the Saviour can no more co-exist than light and darkness. If you feel any lingering attachment to the vanities of life, go and ask your Saviour to make you love him more, and find your happiness in his service. Then you will resolve to be world-renouncing Christians, if you profess at all to be Christians. Then you may stand at this altar, and as you look at the pomps, the vanities, the pleasures, the honors, the covetous desires of the world, say without a sigh of regret, I renounce them all, and by God's help will endeavor not to follow nor be led by them.

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## SERMON IV.

### RENUNCIATION OF THE SINFUL LUSTS OF THE FLESH.

“Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.”—  
1 *Peter* ii. 11.

**I**N our course of Sermons upon a public confession of Christ, we have considered the baptismal vow of renunciation of the devil and all his works, and of the world, with its pomps and vanities.

Our subject now is the promise to renounce all the sinful lusts of the flesh.

One large class of our temptations assails us through the appetites of the body, or of our sensual

nature. According to Jewish notions, the flesh was the seat and occasion of moral imperfection, and was regarded as inducing men to transgress through its desires and passions. The word of God sanctions this view, so far at least as to speak of the body as a great instrument of corruption, and a hindrance to the soul in the service of Christ. Who shall deliver me, says St. Paul, from the body of this death? The carnal mind, or the mind influenced by fleshly appetites, is enmity against God. If ye through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. And how often in Scripture is the exhortation addressed to us, to present our bodies, as well as our souls, a living sacrifice unto God; to mortify the body, to crucify its affections and lusts, to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh as well as of the spirit, and to glorify God in our bodies and in our spirits, which are his. And St. Paul says, I bring under my body and keep it in subjection, lest when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away, as if his great danger, apostle as he was, lay in the corrupt tendencies of the sensual appetites.

It is to be feared that the lack of bodily mortification is one of the greatest defects of modern religion. The early Christians may have erred in the other extreme, of supposing that all attainments in piety were to be gained through the maceration of the flesh. In a more corrupt age this was carried so far, and so much was made of penances, abstinence, and bodily austerities, that we, justly dreading the sad consequences of that error, are too much disposed to regard

the subjugation of bodily appetites as no part of true religion. Yet the word of God commands us to crucify the flesh, and our text exhorts us to abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul. Here, as every where else, we should follow the wise example of our Church, which, in reforming from papal errors, was not driven into the other extreme, to the sacrifice of God's own truth.

What then, let us ask, are the sinful lusts of the flesh which we must renounce?

St. Paul enumerates some of them, when he says, Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

1. Upon these sins, in their grosser forms, we cannot dwell. They fill hell with their victims. They ruin soul and body more effectually than any other class of crimes. They are linked in with nearly all the horrible tragedies which, in our public prints, astound us from time to time. And yet such is the state of public opinion, right or wrong, that the pulpit must be silent upon these subjects, and the young and unwary suffered to go forward, where they most need counsel, without one warning voice. Thank God, the Bible is not silent, but speaks with a plainness which will leave all without excuse if they fall, though prudery or modesty should seal the lips of every other monitor.

2. But among those lusts of the flesh to be renounced, of which we may speak plainly, we may give the first place to intemperance.

No part of Christian morals has been more fully discussed in the present day than that of temperance, or rather of abstinence from intoxicating drinks. My own views and practice in the matter I have no hesitation in expressing now, and on all proper occasions. In the efforts of temperance societies I take no part. As now conducted, they do not seem to be the Scriptural way of contending against sin,—they lead men to attempt to overcome it apart from the grace of God, and with no appeal to those gospel aids and motives which alone can be effectual—and they are mingled with so much that is political or infidel in its character, that though once actively engaged in them, I now stand aloof. Still, many of the best Christians regard them as an instrument of blessing, and no disciple of Christ would be willing to hinder their work. If they do not strike at the root of the tree of sin, God speed them if they do but strip off any of its branches or leaves. They have done great good—more, I think, however, as originally planned and in their earlier efforts, than of late years, when they have passed from direct Christian influences, and are under control not so decidedly religious. Those who have become the slaves of intemperance, may find it an advantage to give a solemn pledge of abstinence, but they ought never to be asked to do it without prayer for grace to keep their vow, and those who labor in such societies ought to bring religious motives and aids as prominently for-



ward as possible, for God will bless no effort to reform the world that separates itself from the Gospel of his Son.

In practice I feel it my duty to pursue the same course that I did twenty-five years ago, abstaining from the use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage, not allowing them on my table, nor offering them to my guests, and seldom participating in them when offered. A clergyman in these days, who pursues any other course,—who exhibits a bloated face and rubicund visage, adorns his table with black bottles, and pledges his visitors in the wine-cup,—bears about him the smell of liquors, and betrays by his thickened speech his indulgence in them, or distinguishes himself in travelling and at hotels by his solitary decanter, is to be regarded as a disgrace to his calling, and as lending his influence to the cause of intemperance. Happily that race of ministers is dying out, and is now seldom seen except in our large cities, where vice, like weeds in a barn-yard, vegetates, when every where else it has expired.

That course then, which as a Christian and minister I adopt, I would commend to you. Whether taking a pledge, or basing your action on Christian principle, or combining both, resolve upon the strictest temperance, or even upon total abstinence in the use of intoxicating drinks. There may be cases where they are valuable as a medicine, or they may be allowed to the aged, but for persons in health, and for the young, the safest and most Christian rule is to let them entirely alone. The fact that we have scarcely

any liquors which are not manufactured in the cellars of our cities, of the most deleterious materials, ought alone to be a sufficient plea for abstinence. And if that be not enough, the desolation which drunkenness makes all around us,—the poverty, the vice, the crime, the threats of God's word against it, and the hell reserved for the drunkard, should render every Christian careful how he lends support to that which Satan rejoices in as his best agency.

And as to spiritual influences on the soul, it is vain to hope for them where intemperance exists. We sometimes see members of the Church, who are known to indulge freely and habitually in the use of intoxicating drinks, who may never perhaps be overcome so as to reel and stagger, but are made stupid, talk foolishly, and disclose to others that they have drunk more than was for their good,—and we are very sure that the Holy Ghost will not lodge in their hearts,—that they will never attain to eminence in piety,—that they will be likely to indulge more and more, until the life, as well as the very name of the Christian, has been lost. Let them remember their baptismal vow to renounce the sinful lusts of the flesh. Good, and amiable they may be in other respects, but their fellow-Christians see how it is with them, even when they flatter themselves that their secret habits are unsuspected. They betray themselves while they would seem amazing wise and innocent, and friends look on with sighs of regret, asking what shall stay them, or how shall they be saved?

And here, too, lies the hindrance to the conversion

of many a sinner. He attends in the house of God, hears truth which reaches his conscience and leads him to wish to become a Christian, but there is this diseased appetite in the way—he is a tippler—he has an habitual craving for stimulants,—the longing for them has been nourished till at the regular hour it must be satisfied, and he lives for the most part under the influence of liquor,—the tears of penitence which he sheds are distilled from the wine-cup, and the breath of his prayers, as it goes up to God, is rank with the poison of his potations. Will this man become a Christian? Ask those who have seen such as these come to the house of God year after year, except when offended by some faithful word they have absented themselves, and they will tell you that these are among the most hopeless of attendants there. Whoever is so in the habit of using intoxicating liquors that at the set hour he begins to crave them,—is restless if unsupplied—cannot easily dispense with them for weeks and months together, and secretly feels that he is in chains, though he will not own it, or betrays himself to others, though fancying himself unsuspected, will find that he can never enjoy religion while holding on to his besetment. If he would be prepared to confess his Saviour before men, let him renounce this sinful lust of the flesh.

And the same bar to spiritual life and happiness is found in the intemperate or luxurious indulgence in food. This is a sin less baneful in its public influence than drunkenness, but scarcely less hurtful in its private and personal consequences. It is the household

deity of those whose God is their belly, not as visible as some other idols, but an idol still. When a man is much occupied in catering what he shall eat—when he has reached such a state that he cannot relish the simplest food—when he so gorges that the mind is as stupid as the drunkard's, and that he is more likely to fall asleep in devotions than to engage in them with spirituality and fervor, there is but little difference between him and the drunkard; and swine are hardly less capable of feeding on angel's food than both of them. "Intemperance, gluttony, and luxury of body, leave a kind of sottishness and stupidity about the soul, as the upper part of a chimney is sooted and blackened by the fire below." Leighton says, "An excessive eating and drinking both makes the body sickly and lazy, fit for nothing but sleep, and besots the mind, making it move heavily, as a coach in a deep and miry way. All immoderate use of the world and its delights wrongs the soul in its spiritual condition, makes it sickly and feeble, full of spiritual distempers and inactivity; and obstructs the way and motion of the Spirit of God. Therefore," he says, "if you would be spiritual, healthful, and vigorous, and enjoy much of the consolations of heaven, be sparing and sober in those of earth, and what you abate of the one shall certainly be made up to you in the other."

Who is not conscious that he often unfits himself for spiritual duties by bodily excesses? It has been said by an ultraist in physiology, that sickness is as much a sin as theft or murder; but though he would probably view the matter differently if a fit of sickness

were sent upon himself, yet it is certain, and it will become more and more clear to us, as we know and follow the laws of our twofold nature, that many of our diseases of body and of soul may be traced to sinful self-indulgence, and to causes over which we have control. Let us feel that a part of our religion is to keep our bodies in temperance, soberness, and chastity—to abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul—and to aim at a state that will leave all our powers in their most perfect condition for the Master's use. That was a lofty speech of a heathen, that he was greater and born to greater things, than to be a servant of the body. Too many, like Esau, will sell their birthright for a mess of pottage, or resemble the Israelites in the desert, whose lusts God satisfied, but sent leanness withal into their souls. Gain the victory over the body, and you may then say, that you renounce all the sinful lusts of the flesh.

We have now seen what are the great enemies we have to contend against in our profession of religion. They are the devil, the world, and the flesh. We are to mourn that these enemies have had so much power over us, and then we are to resolve against their future dominion, loathe, and renounce it.

You will observe, however, that we make no positive promise of utter renunciation. Many are afraid to take the vows of a public profession, lest they should not keep them. You are not required to promise absolutely to keep them. The answer in our Church service is, I renounce them all, and by God's help will endeavor not to follow nor be led by them. And here-

in the Church shows her wisdom. Temperance pledges are liable to objection, because they make a man promise positively, without any acknowledgment of his dependence on God, to keep a vow of abstinence from a particular sin. Our Church requires no such vow, but only that you will endeavor by God's help to renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh. You must be sincere and earnest, it is true, in that resolve, and with all your soul strive to keep it. But no doubt you will repeatedly fail of so doing. After your profession, you will be led away by the temptations of those very foes that you have renounced. The best Christians have done so, and you will probably succeed no better. Your whole religious life will be one of endeavor to serve God, with some successes, and with many failures. Over your failures you must mourn, not as unpardonable sins, or as the perjured breach of your Christian vow, but as sad evidences of the frailty of your nature, and of your need of a Saviour's merits—rising from them, as the racer does from his falls, not to give up the race, but to press on for the prize.

This is the life that is before you as professing Christians. Are you ready to enter upon it? Can you on such terms enlist under Christ's banners, and fight manfully against the devil, the world, and the flesh? God will give you grace. The first step towards an open confession of his name will draw down aid; and if now in your heart there be a secret desire to number yourselves with Christ's followers, he beholds it with approbation, and is ready to enable you

to carry it into good effect. Difficulties no doubt you will meet, but go on in the name of the Lord, and you shall overcome. Only do not be but half-resolved. Do not stand looking upon earthly allurements, reluctant to leave them. Do not calculate upon being a Christian, yet able to keep in pretty well with the world, or to retain a portion of your sinful lusts. Let your renunciation, as you stand at this altar, be full and sincere, with not a wish to indulge in any thing that will be inconsistent with your promise—with a pure intention of endeavoring to do all that is therein contained. It is delightful to welcome those within the fold who seem to have made up their minds that there is one thing necessary for them, and that is to be true Christians, at whatever sacrifice, or by whatever effort. May we welcome many such in our approaching opportunities of a public confession of the Saviour.



## SERMON V.

### F A I T H .

“Dost thou believe on the Son of God?”—*St. John ix. 35.*

**I**N our course of Sermons upon a public confession of Christ, we have already considered that promise of renunciation of the devil, the world, and the flesh, which we make in the Baptismal service.

Next in order is the question, “Dost thou believe all

the articles of the Christian faith, as contained in the apostles' creed?" To which the answer is, "I do." Our subject, then, to-day, will be—Faith, as a requisite for a public confession of Christ.

1. The Church requires belief in the articles of the creed.

At a very early period, it was found expedient to draw up a summary of the most essential truths of Christianity as a statement to the world of Christian doctrine, as a means of making Christians themselves familiar with the leading features of their system, and also to preserve the faith and hand it down from age to age. Scarcely any Church has been without its creeds. That which we call the apostles', is not known to have been composed by them, though it was in use very early, and may have been compiled by inspired men. But however that may be, it is certainly an admirable compend of the Gospel. It is comprehensive. It does not attempt to set forth minutely all the doctrines of the Bible, but gives us those of vital importance. By requiring us to believe that which is contained therein, our Church does not teach that nothing else ought to be believed, but that with nothing less should any one stand up to make a public confession of Christ.

2. It is evident, also, that the articles of the creed are to be taken in the sense in which the Church understands them. A Unitarian may say that he assents to every article—that is, according to his own interpretation of it,—that he believes in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, though, not with Trinitarians, that he is the co-equal and co-eternal Son of the Father; and



the question has arisen, whether, because he could so assent, he might come forward to Baptism, Confirmation, and the Lord's Supper in our Church? Certainly not. Articles of faith are to be taken according to the mind of those who propound, not according to any perverted explanation of those who receive them. If you give an invitation to a feast at your house, you have a right that it should be understood as you clearly meant it. And if the Church invites to her communion those who believe in the apostles' creed, it is those only who believe it as it is understood by the Church. Now, our Church is decidedly Trinitarian. When she professes in the creed to believe in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, it is as three persons in one Godhead; therefore, a Unitarian could not honestly stand up at her altar and affirm that he believed all the articles of the Christian faith, as contained in the apostles' creed; for, though he might believe in a sense of his own, it would not be in the sense of the baptismal question.

The same remarks apply to other forms of error. A Universalist might say there is nothing in the creed that asserts the eternal punishment of the wicked; I can, therefore, assent to it, and come forward in your Church to sacraments. But the reply is, the creed does teach us the doctrine of a final judgment, and, in the Litany, we pray for deliverance from everlasting damnation. So that it is evidently the doctrine of the creed and of the Church, that there is to be a future punishment of the wicked. Our Church is large and liberal in her terms of membership; but she holds not the suicidal and unchristian notion that all forms of

doctrine, grossly erroneous and opposite to each other, can be maintained by those in her fold ; so that Unitarian, Universalist, and Trinitarian, may alike come to her sacraments. In all important points of doctrine, the sense is as much fixed as is the letter of our standard. When, therefore, you are asked if you believe the articles of the Christian faith as contained in the apostles' creed, you must be prepared to answer, not according to some perverted interpretation of your own, but according to the well-known meaning of the Church, that you do believe in each one of them.

It is evident, also, that there must be something more than a cold speculative faith in these articles, ere one can make a public confession of Christ. There are multitudes who assent to every thing in the creed in its literal and fullest meaning, who yet are not Christians. The same man who has the clearest understanding of the Gospel system, who can prove and defend every point in it, may yet be most ungodly in his life. The devils believe and tremble. To assert, then, at this altar, that we believe, we must have, not a mere faith of the understanding, but a living faith. And this may serve to correct the mistake of those parents who think their children prepared for confirmation, merely because they can say the creed, the Lord's prayer, and the ten commandments ; for they must believe with the heart unto righteousness before they can confess with the mouth unto salvation.

3. This leads us to the most important requisite in a public confession ; viz., saving faith in Christ.

All hinges upon this one point. The great doctrine

of the Bible is, that we are justified by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever else a man may have, he is not prepared for a public profession of religion, until he has become united to Christ by a true and living faith; and, we may add, one who has such a faith can hardly want any other requisite for that profession. Let me call special attention, therefore, to the inquiry of our text—"Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" Hast thou come to the Saviour as a poor, sinful creature, and so put thy trust in him that thou canst believe thy sins are forgiven, and thy soul accepted for Jesus' sake? Every man is by nature and practice a sinner, deserving eternal wrath; but God has set his Son forth as a propitiation for our sins, and declared that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. A Christian, then, is a man who has fled to this Saviour, and laid hold upon the hope set before him in the Gospel—who has utterly cast away all dependence on his own merits for salvation, and is expecting deliverance from hell, and to attain everlasting life through the alone righteousness of his Redeemer. Faith in Christ justifies. Looking to the Saviour, our sins are blotted out, just as when an Israelite looked upon the brazen serpent, he lived. Many appear to have the idea that by being in the outward and visible Church, they are, as a matter of course, in Christ; but it is not so. Multitudes have been baptized and are partakers of all the outward privileges of the Church, who have no part or lot in him. It is a personal act of our own to believe in Christ—a work of the soul in which no man may de-

liver his brother, or make an agreement unto God for him—a solemn transaction between Christ and ourselves, by which we engage to take him as our Saviour, and he engages to pardon, sanctify, and save us. It cannot be too earnestly impressed upon our hearts that the beginning of all religion, its secret, life, and power, depends upon the question whether we have a living, personal, justifying faith in the Son of God.

Upon that point, let me urge those who would make a public profession, to try themselves. You may err in other matters, and error may not be fatal. You may not come up to the Christian standard in renouncing the world, and yet be saved, though as a weak, defective Christian; but if you have not faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are not a Christian at all. Do you look to him, then, as your Saviour? Have you come to him as a guilty sinner, and taken him as your only hope? Does your peace flow from what he has done, or from what you have done? Are you self-righteous, or trusting in the righteousness of Christ? When you think of a public profession of religion, is it, saying in your heart, I am not worthy in myself; my Saviour's merits are all my plea? Whoever can answer these inquiries with any satisfaction, conscious of a real trust in his Saviour, though it be but weak, need not fear to make that confession of Christ which his word requires.

And it is remarkable how a living faith in Christ clears away difficulties upon other points, and vivifies all other preparation. He is the life of men, and it is necessary to touch him, and draw from his divine life,

ere we can be said to have any life in us. To this point let me direct those who have difficulties in the way of their salvation. Some of you may be ready to say, I have faith, I believe every article of the creed, but I fear that it is with only a speculative faith—it does not seem to be an experimental faith—it wants power, life, and warmth, and I fear is the result of my education rather than the belief of my whole heart. Your remedy is in looking to Christ. A speculative believer is like that young daughter of Jairus, over whom friends were making lamentation ;—the body was there,—all the limbs, the members, the nerves and the veins were there, but there was no life. The moment, however, the hand of Jesus touched her, life was there, it coursed through every vein, it animated every limb, and she stood up with the vigor, warmth, and activity of a living being. Pray that his quickening touch may reach your souls, and they shall live. You will recite every other article of the creed with a very different feeling, when, with a true faith, you can say, I believe in Jesus Christ. Then you will call God your Father with a childlike spirit of adoption, and believe in the Holy Ghost with a realizing, experimental belief.

And so of other difficulties that you may meet or fear in making a public confession of Christ. Looking unto him dispels all. Do you feel yourself a great sinner ? he is able to save to the uttermost. Do you fear that you shall not persevere in a Christian course ? his grace will be sufficient for you. Do you know that you have a strong love of the world ? that dies

under the love of Jesus. Are you disposed to put off a public confession of your Saviour? you will not, you cannot, if you see him on the cross, realizing what he has there done for you. Behold this Lamb of God, O hearer! In him is life, motive, strength, and pardon, all that you can ask, or think of, or ever need,—all treasured up in him, and yours only for the asking. If Christ is yours, and you are his, what can you want beside? Faith in Christ seems to stand in the midst of the creed and of the baptismal answers, like the heart in the body, as the life of all. It looks back upon our renunciation of the world, and forward upon our resolutions to keep God's holy will and commandments, giving to each strength and power,—it breathes itself into every other article in the creed, imparting a living faith in all. Therefore examine yourselves especially on your faith in Christ, whether it be sincere, evangelical, justifying; for if right here, you can hardly be wrong any where else.

4. And finally remember, that a living faith in Christ is exercised only through the gift and operation of the Holy Spirit. St. Paul speaks of having Christ revealed *in* him. Christ is revealed *to* us in God's word, by reading which, any one may attain a correct speculative faith. But the living experimental faith, which justifies, sanctifies, and saves, can only be known by those who have had Christ revealed *in* them by the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of God must work in our hearts such a sense of our sinfulness, of our need of a Saviour, of the excellency of Christ and his suitableness to our wants, with such a clinging to him as our only

hope, that like the people of Samaria, we can say, Now we believe, not on the testimony of others, but from our own personal knowledge of Christ. Happy are they who have an experimental trust in him! It is our hope, brethren, when we go forward to the table of the Lord. It will be our hope in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment. Pray that those around you may share it. Pray that all who shall come forward at this altar, in any public confession of the Saviour, may clearly understand and heartily believe, that in the Lord Jesus Christ alone they have everlasting righteousness and strength.

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## SERMON VI.

### BAPTISM.

“What doth hinder me to be baptized?”—*Acts viii. 36.*

WE have considered the promise to renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, and the profession of belief in all the articles of the Christian faith as contained in the apostles' creed. We shall be led next to notice the several ways in which a sacramental confession of Christ is to be made; viz., in Baptism, Confirmation, and the Lord's Supper.

Our subject now is, that presented in the succeeding question of the service, Wilt thou be baptized in this faith? with the reply, That is my desire.

To make this reply intelligently, or to renew it in Confirmation, we must understand the nature and benefits of Baptism, and to these I would call your attention at this time.

The Sacrament of Baptism consists of two parts, the outward and visible sign, and the inward and spiritual grace, or, as our Saviour has expressed it, we must be born of water, and we must be born of the Spirit.

1. Let us first notice the new birth of the Spirit.

It is the doctrine of Scripture, that every man inherits a depraved nature continually inclining him to sin, so that he cannot love nor serve God until he has been created anew by the Holy Spirit. I need not dwell upon the proofs of this assertion, but take it for granted that every hearer knows enough of God's word and of his own natural condition, to be assured of his need of a change of heart, ere he can serve God here, or be happy with him hereafter. And indeed, the great trouble with most of those who are thinking of a public confession of Christ, is, the fear that they have not experienced that change. If satisfied upon this point, they would not hesitate a moment in coming to Sacraments. They are right in supposing this vital change to be a necessary pre-requisite, and if they cannot hope that they are new creatures in Christ Jesus, they must seek to become so, ere they confess their Lord.

2. What then is the new birth of the Spirit, and what its signs or evidences?

We reply, that a part of these evidences have al-



ready been considered. If you have renounced the devil, the world, and the flesh, with a true repentance, you are converted by the Spirit of God. No person can turn from them but with a regenerated heart; if, therefore, we are seeking to overcome them, it is a sign that we are new creatures in Christ Jesus. If you would know whether you have the new birth of the Spirit, you must ask yourself whether you cheerfully give up the allurements of the world so far as they seem inconsistent with the Gospel,—whether you are mortifying your sinful lusts,—whether you perceive and aim to subdue the pride of your heart and all its evil tempers, so that no indwelling sin shall have dominion over you,—and whether you look upon many things you once indulged in with a different eye, desiring now to renounce them for Christ's sake? If so, you have encouraging proof that you have been born of the Spirit, and may ask, What doth hinder me to be baptized, or confirmed, or to go to the Lord's table?

3. Many, when the new birth is spoken of, think of it as a thing of mystery, and perplex themselves to understand it, as they would strain their eyes to see the pathway of the passing wind. It is a mystery so far as the work of the Spirit is concerned, but in its fruits and evidences it is as much a matter of fact and personal observation as any thing else. We cannot see the wind, but we can perceive its effects. We cannot describe the Spirit's converting process in the soul, but we can know its results. No doubt some distress themselves with the anxious wish that they could experience a change of heart, who have already

been truly born of the Spirit. Let them turn away from that phantom of their pursuit, the new birth of an excited imagination, and let them look among the sober realities of life whether they have had the new birth of Scripture. I have shown them where to search for evidence, and I may name a few points more. If you have faith in the Son of God, such as I attempted to describe in the preceding discourse, that is proof that you are born of God, for none but a converted heart can truly rely on Christ. If you love God,—if you find pleasure in reading his word and in his worship,—if you take some delight, though not as much as you would wish, in secret prayer, and do habitually engage in it ;—if you are aiming sincerely to live a Christian life, and to overcome sin,—if you are interested in the success of the Gospel, and ready to labor for its furtherance,—if your heart's desire and prayer for your families and friends is that they may be saved,—if you have sympathy in all that Christ bears up in his intercessions, you may rest upon all this as conclusive evidence that you have been born of God, and have the inward part or thing signified by Baptism. I do not lead you off into the regions of dreams and fancies, nor ask you to relate the experience of your change, its date, or the prodigies that attended it, but direct you to the matter-of-fact inquiry, whether you have the spirit of a Christian, and live like a Christian ; for if you can hope, that though weak and imperfect, you have yet in some humble degree the temper of a child of God, and are acting like a child of God, you need not trouble yourself to inquire how

you became such, any more than, finding yourself a living active being, you need perplex yourself concerning the phenomena of your natural birth. Try then your spirit, your conduct, your daily walk, your prayers, your repentance, your faith, your love to God and man, your obedience, your desires to live a new life,—try all faithfully, as in the sight of God, and if the answer of conscience leads you to hope you are Christ's, then you may ask, What doth hinder me to be baptized, or in any other way to confess his name?

4. The great matter of spiritual fitness being thus disposed of, other difficulties concerning the nature and necessity of the outward form, remain to be considered.

The necessity of a sacramental confession of Christ has already been dwelt upon generally, in the first discourse, and the need of Baptism particularly, is asserted in Scripture in the strongest terms. The same inspired truth which demands the inward part or thing signified, usually conjoins the outward sign, and we neglect either at our peril. Believe and be baptized—repent and be baptized, be born of water and of the Spirit, are the customary expressions. When the most solemn inquiry that ever fell from the lips of man, that of awakened souls, was addressed to the apostles, Men and brethren what shall we do? the answer was, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ. Never speak lightly then of the outward form of Baptism. Never presume that you can be saved without it.

5. With regard to the nature and importance of

the outward form we may observe, that it was intended to be a sign or badge of the inward change or thing signified. As the soul is washed by the blood and Spirit of Jesus, so water is sprinkled to be an outward token of this inward cleansing, or, the regeneration by water is meant to be a symbol of spiritual regeneration. Baptism is a badge of our Christian profession. It is the mode of admission into the visible Church of Christ, as circumcision was into the Jewish Church, and the initiatory Sacrament of each covenant is of precisely the same meaning, obligation, and importance. In Baptism we engage to be the Lord's, and when the outward form and the thing signified have both been attained, the forgiveness of our sins, and our justification before God, are sealed to us in that Sacrament, whence it is called a Baptism for the remission of sins. All these benefits flow to us from Baptism rightly received. Indeed, we have no authority to say that any spiritual blessing is promised to, or can be hoped for by those who wilfully neglect this Sacrament. Look through the Old Testament and the New, and you will see how constantly God has connected all his mercies and his grace with those who enter into visible covenant with him. To speak slightly of the outward form would be, then, proudly to suppose that we could have salvation in our own way, instead of seeking it in God's appointed channels. To be born of the Spirit is indeed the main thing, but to be born of water also, is what every true Christian will desire, just as the Ethiopian in our text so soon as he believed, asked, What doth hinder me to be baptized?

6. But we are to be careful on the other hand, of attributing too much to the mere act of Baptism. Many suppose that the spiritual regeneration of the soul is invariably conveyed to all infants in Baptism, and to all adults who receive it aright, so that when water is applied by the priest the soul is that instant born anew of the Holy Spirit.\* This is a gross error. Nowhere in Scripture is the new birth of the Spirit tied to, or promised invariably in Baptism. On the contrary, in the case of adults whose Baptism is recorded there, we find, as St. Chrysostom asserts of the three thousand on the day of Pentecost, that they were already spiritually regenerated before they were baptized, and that they received Baptism as an outward sign of the inward change, just as Abraham believed God, was justified, and afterwards received circumcision as a seal of his righteousness by faith. We could believe that all infants are invariably spiritually regenerated in Baptism, if it were warranted by express assertion of Scripture, but to infer it because, as is asserted, there being no bar of unfitness in their case the benefit flows to them as a matter of course, would be a large inference, when we consider that there is no promise tying the blessing to the outward form,—when we know that spiritual circumcision did not always accompany the circumcision of the flesh in the Jewish infant, and when we have the evidence of experience and of our senses to prove that there is often no new creation of the soul in Baptism. In the case

\* See Note at the end of the Sermon.

of adults, there seems clear evidence in almost every instance in the New Testament, that spiritual regeneration manifested in repentance and faith, preceded Baptism, and not that Baptism was the means of the spiritual regeneration. The general order was, first the word was preached to awaken repentance and faith, then Baptism was administered in token that repentance and faith were exercised. That the new birth of the Spirit is not confined to Baptism alone is clear, for it is often said that we are born anew of the good seed of the word. God converts the soul in a variety of ways, by a dream, in Baptism, by afflictions, or by the secret calls of his Spirit in the conscience; but the usual method of his dealings is, first by the preaching of the word to convince and convert, and then by Baptism to seal and signify, not produce, that conversion.

And such is the ground our Church evidently takes. She demands faith, repentance, and obedience, which are equivalent to spiritual regeneration, in all adults who come to be baptized; and she does not admit infants to Baptism but upon a promise of faith, repentance, and obedience, made by their sponsors. So far from making spiritual regeneration inseparable from Baptism, she supposes adults to be regenerate before Baptism, and pronounces infants regenerate only as the conditions on which they were baptized are fulfilled, else where is the use of the questions and answers in the case of infants, and why are they the same as in adult Baptism? In her articles and catechism, the Church speaks of Baptism as the sign of regeneration.

It cannot be the sign and the thing signified too, any more than the sign of a store can be the store itself, or the contents thereof. It is only as Baptism is rightly received—that is, as it is complete in both its inward and outward parts—that the Church pronounces any, in the fullest sense of the term, regenerate. It is absurd, unscriptural, and opposed to the teaching of the Church, to speak of the waters of Baptism as infallibly conveying to us, or even to infants, the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit. It is a Popish device to magnify priestly power. If it were true that the act of the minister conveyed this great sacramental grace so as in a moment to change our depraved nature, wash away sin, and fit for heaven, why did St. Paul thank God that he had baptized so few; and why does our Church allow deacons to baptize, as if it were an inferior office, nor even condemn lay-baptism as invalid? One would think, that if spiritual regeneration were tied to Baptism, the great work of the ministry would be to baptize; yet St. Paul says Christ sent him, not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel. Therefore, we conclude that men are usually regenerated by the preaching of the Gospel; and then when that greater work has been performed, the outward sign of it is applied as a lesser, but still necessary act, by those in an inferior grade of the ministry.

8. But it may be asked, why does our Church speak of persons as regenerate in Baptism? Why, we reply, were all the Israelites spoken of as circumcised, when many of them had not the thing signified, the circumcision of the heart? By a mode of speech common in

Scripture, as also among ourselves, the outward sign is frequently and interchangeably used for the thing signified. We say, to quote the illustration of another, that the President of these United States becomes so by his inauguration, whereas in truth he becomes so by the election of the people ; and if there be no valid election, the outward ceremony of his inauguration would not make him President. So, when in Baptism, we speak of persons as regenerate ; if there has been no spiritual renewal, or if there shall be none, the charitable judgment of the Church is proved unfounded, and the person is no more regenerate than every circumcised Israelite was made circumcised in heart by that sacrament, or than mere inauguration makes a President. Take the services of the Church as a whole, and there is no difficulty in them.

In the case of infants, the assertion that they are regenerate is predicated on the condition that the promises made for them are fulfilled, otherwise there would be no use in the promises. A minor may have an estate made over to him, on pledges made for him, by his guardians ; and we may speak of it as his estate while he is yet a minor. But if, when he comes to years, he fulfils not the conditions, he forfeits the estate. So in Baptism ; we speak of a child as regenerate on the promises of its parents, and until we have in its own acts proofs of the non-fulfilment of those promises, and that it is not regenerate. We do not know but that the child may be already regenerate. Some are created anew by God's Spirit, like John the Baptist, from their birth—some in Baptism, perhaps—



some before, some after that sacrament. John the Baptist was as fit for Baptism at his birth as St. Paul was at thirty-five. Every infant, dying in infancy, is regenerate before it enters heaven. Therefore, we apply the outward sign in infancy, and speak of all as regenerate in the hope that it is so, though we may be mistaken, as we may also be in the case of adults, and as even the apostles were in the instance of Simon Magus.

If these views are just and scriptural, you will desire to be baptized, because you would comply with all your Saviour's will, and as an outward badge of your discipleship, not expecting that regenerating grace will invariably be conveyed in that sacrament, though, as our article says, faith and grace are thereby, not implanted, but increased.

9. But perhaps, if satisfied upon these points, you may still have difficulties in regard to the *mode* of Baptism.

Our Church maintains that either immersion, sprinkling, or pouring, is valid and scriptural. It is certain that all of these modes are spoken of in Scripture as Baptism. The Israelites were baptized in the Red Sea; yet they were not immersed, for the Scripture says they went through on dry ground, and may have only been sprinkled with the spray, or from the clouds which the Psalmist says gave forth water. The Jews baptized, as the original reads, Mark 7: 4, when they came from the markets; and yet we know that their custom was merely to dip the hand in water—not to immerse their whole bodies. Thousands were bap-

tized in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost; but, as there is no brook ankle-deep within many miles of that city, it could hardly have been immersion. John baptized multitudes in Jordan; yet it seems improbable that these people were provided with any thing like the modern baptismal garments, or that they were plunged in their ordinary clothes, and sent dripping to their homes. The jailer and his family were baptized at midnight; and it is unlikely that they sallied forth at that hour to find a stream deep enough for immersion. The common terms denoting the application of Christ's blood and Spirit are, the sprinkling of his blood, and the pouring out of his Spirit; the sprinkling or pouring of water, therefore, would appear best to correspond with the thing signified. When we add to these arguments the fact that the early Christians did baptize both by sprinkling and immersion—when we know that if the latter be the only Baptism, the dying penitent, though his faith be ever so clear, cannot receive it—when we consider that Christ's religion was designed for the whole world, and how unreasonable it would be to expect converts to be plunged through the ice of Greenland, even if they might safely be immersed in the mild clime of Judea—when nothing is said in Scripture concerning the quantity of water to be used, nor a single instance given where it can be positively proved that the baptized were placed entirely under it—when it would be equally correct to say of the Ethiopian in our text that he went *into* and came *out* of the water, if he did but step into it, as if he were plunged, and when, if the language in that connection

proves immersion, it proves that Philip also was immersed, for both went into and came out of the water,—when all this and much more that might be adduced is considered, I think we shall conclude that our Saviour purposely left the mode to vary according to circumstances, and that our Church wisely considers any Baptism valid where water is applied in the name of the Trinity. Certainly, to assert that either sprinkling or immersion is the only valid mode, or to make the quantity of water in that sacrament essential to the existence of a Church, or of membership in it, is utterly unsupported by Scripture; whereas, propositions involving such serious consequences, ought to have the most clear and positive declarations of God's word in their favor. Therefore, whether it be in a basin, a font, a river, or an ocean, let no scruples about the mode disturb you; but say, with the Ethiopian, See, here is water—what doth hinder me to be baptized?

We have seen, first, that there is an inward fitness for baptism evidenced by Faith, Repentance and Obedience; second, that where this has been attained, no one should neglect the outward form; and third, that the outward form is, in our Church, scriptural in its mode of administration. What has been said is chiefly applicable to the case of adults—that of infants will be hereafter considered.

Oh, ye unbaptized, too thickly interspersed among us, who have lived to maturity or to old age in neglect of this sacrament, what doth hinder you to be baptized? How long will you stand, like the heathen,

without the visible Church of Christ, and with no covenant title to the mercies of God? Let this neglect and delay come to a close; and when, at the next administration of Baptism, the question is asked, Wilt thou be baptized in this faith? be ye there to answer, That is my desire.

NOTE.—In a small volume like the present, intended chiefly for the practical purpose of bringing neglecters of duty to a confession of Christ in his Sacraments, and believing, as I do, that the best way of settling controversies on disputed topics is to go forward earnestly in the path of known duty, there will be no attempt or desire to enter very largely into the vexed question of Baptismal Regeneration. They will have fewest difficulties and disagreements upon this point, as well as upon every other, who study Scripture in the light of a holy obedience to its commands. All Episcopalians happily agree in maintaining the inherent and deep depravity of our nature, and the need of a new creation by the Holy Spirit of God. In regard to that transforming work of the Spirit there appear to be three leading views among us. According to the first, which is held by High and Low Churchmen indiscriminately, the term Regeneration is deemed to be properly applied to that change of *state* by which one is brought into the visible Church of Christ, gaining thereby a covenant title to its blessings with some of the actual gifts of the Holy Spirit, but still perhaps needing afterwards a *change of heart*, which last change, they say, is properly called Renovation. Against this view, there is no serious objection.

The second, which may be called the Tractarian notion, differing in nothing essential from the Romish doctrine, and utterly contrary to Scripture and the teachings of the Church, supposes, that every infant is infallibly regenerated by the Holy Spirit of God in Baptism, so as afterwards to need no change of heart, and so as to require to be treated as a backslider, if it live not according to that beginning.

The third view, presented in these discourses as the true one, supposes, that only one change is spoken of in Scripture and in the services of the Church, under the terms, Regeneration, new creation, &c.—a change wrought by the Spirit of God, of which Baptism is the

outward sign,—not tied to Baptism, but taking place before, in, or after Baptism, or sometimes never taking place in the baptized,—and that, as we can never know whether, or when the spiritual change has taken place, the infant or person is said in the service to be regenerate of the Spirit, hypothetically; that is, in the judgment of Charity; or on condition that the promises are fulfilled. Between the first and the last of these views, there is no such difference as should lead to controversy, since in each it is maintained, that the great change our souls require does not always accompany Baptism even in the infant, but may still need to be sought by the baptized. The second view seems so vitally erroneous as to change the whole Gospel system, overthrow its great doctrines, and destroy all fellowship between those who hold and those who reject it.

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## SERMON VII.

### BAPTISM.

“For the promise is unto you, and to your children.”—*Acts* ii. 39.

**I**N continuing our course upon a public confession of Christ, I propose to consider at this time the case of those who were baptized in infancy, but have never confirmed their baptismal covenant by any personal act. This class will comprise the greater part of every congregation. And I would speak to them as their own parents might, reminding them that in unconscious infancy we brought them to Baptism, showing them why we did so, what we have since done for them, and what is now their duty if they have come to years to act for themselves.

1. You may ask, in the first place, why was I baptized in infancy?

We reply, because such appeared to your parents to be the will of God concerning you. Every state or city gives to its citizens, from their very birth, certain rights and immunities, which they may afterward improve or forfeit; but which, to have had as a birthright, was an advantage. Thus, St. Paul was a free-born Roman citizen, the benefit of which he often found in his travels in preaching the Gospel. God, we believe, does in the Church what every state does—makes some provision for the youngest—permits them to be born by Baptism into his kingdom, and to be registered as citizens of the heavenly city, who shall grow up, if faithful and under good training, to all its rights and blessings. Certainly, natural affection in every Christian parent would lead him to wish that it might be so, and, to say, Let my children have all of Church privilege that they are capable of; let not the Jew see his little ones brought into covenant with God, while I, under a higher dispensation, am compelled to behold mine standing, like the heathen, without the fold. The very fact that such a wish is congenial to the truest affection of our nature, is presumptive proof that God has gratified it in such a sacrament as infant Baptism, for our religion satisfies all the sinless cravings of the soul.

2. But let us pass on to more direct proofs. The first of these is found in the oneness of the Jewish and Christian Church.

God never had but one Church on earth. It is described as the olive tree, from which the Jews were

broken off, and into which the Gentiles were grafted, while the tree remains the same—as the same vineyard unfaithfully cultivated by God's ancient people, and let to others—as a kingdom taken from the Jews and given to the Gentiles, not as a new kingdom,—while the same Saviour, the same faith, the same holiness, the same heaven, belong to each dispensation. Now, the argument is, as infants were admitted to the Church in one age, they are just as capable of the privilege in another; and, as God once commanded them to be admitted, nothing but his own command can take the privilege from them, for a law once in force continues until repealed by the authority that enacted it. Thus, the Sabbath is yet observed, though not enjoined in the New Testament, because of its original appointment. Instead of asking, therefore, for a command in the New Testament for baptizing infants, we demand a positive injunction from God excluding them from his Church, and, finding none, we dare not repeal his appointments.

Our text may be mentioned as a further argument for infant Baptism. It follows immediately after a command to be baptized, and adds, "For the promise is unto you, and to your children," as if they were also to be baptized. If it means to children old enough to believe, there was no need of making the distinction; but if to children not old enough to believe, then there is some way of interesting children in the promises before they can believe.

And how, we may ask, would the converted Jews in the apostles' days be likely to have understood the

matter, for we must put ourselves in their situation to get at the true meaning of Scripture language. Now, they had not only been accustomed to have their children brought into covenant with God in circumcision, but to see Baptism, which was no new thing among them, administered to whole families of proselytes, parents, and children. When the command was, therefore, to go and baptize, they would undoubtedly understand that households were to be baptized, including children, according to the common custom, and as was probably done in the case of Lydia, Stephanas, and the jailer at Philippi. That the Jews did understand their children were to be admitted to the Christian Church, is evident from the fact that some of them, after they believed in Christ, continued to circumcise their children, which practice the apostles did not forbid. They circumcised them, undoubtedly, to bring them into Christ's Church; the apostles, by allowing the practice, allowed that it was right for them to be admitted there, trusting that in time their old prejudices in regard to the mode of admission would wear away, and that they would substitute infant Baptism in place of circumcision, as they did by a gradual change. The mode of admission was of comparatively small moment—the right of admission was of great consequence; and, as the apostles allowed the right, every circumcision of a Christian Jew's child under their eye is equivalent to a case of infant Baptism, sanctioned by apostolic authority.

St. Paul, again, decided that where a Christian was married to a heathen, the children should be considered



not unclean, but holy—that is, not absolutely, but relatively holy,—so that they might be admitted to the Christian covenant.

There is no instance, moreover, in the New Testament, of the Baptism of an adult, whose parents were Christians; the inference from which is, that all such were baptized in infancy. Why is not Timothy's Baptism recorded as well as that of Cornelius, and the jailer, and many others? Because, as the son of a Christian woman, he had probably been baptized in his infancy, and the Baptism of an infant would not be so likely to be mentioned as that of an adult.

When to these arguments we add the Saviour's assertion concerning little children, of such is the kingdom of heaven, which, whether it means that they constitute a large part of the inhabitants of the world of glory, or are patterns for those who would enter there, shows their fitness for the visible Church on earth—when the believing Jews would certainly have murmured if their offspring had been deprived of that covenant relation with God in which they had always stood—when one of the early fathers says that no impious heretic was ever heard of who denied Baptism to young children—and when all the great religious bodies, in every age and part of the world, have retained infant Baptism,—we think we have shown to you, who were baptized in infancy, reasons sufficient to justify your parents in bringing you to that holy sacrament.

3. If it be objected against all this, that faith is required before Baptism in that text which says, He

that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, we reply, that does not refer to infants, else it will prove that they will be damned, for he that believeth not, it is added, shall be damned.

If it is asked, Is it not better to leave children till they are old enough to think and act for themselves in regard to Baptism? We answer, it is best to do what seems the will of God, instead of setting up our own reasonings in the matter. The Jew might have made the same reply when directed to circumcise his child. And by the way, we seldom hear this cavil from those who were baptized in infancy, for they are generally satisfied with that act of their parents; while, on the other hand, many adults neglecting Baptism, have been heard to wish that they had been baptized in childhood, which shows us that the cavil is often a cover for negligence, rather than founded in reason.

And as to the objection some urge, that they cannot see how an unconscious infant can derive benefit from Baptism, we answer, that might have been equally urged against circumcision, and yet inspiration has declared that there was much advantage every way in circumcision. God can bless the Sacrament, as assuredly as he can prayer, to the soul of the child, or as the Saviour's taking little ones in his arms did undoubtedly avail to their benefit.

If it be urged again, that as an infant is incapable of that which is signified in Baptism, it ought not to receive its outward sign; we answer, the objection would apply equally to circumcision, which, though an outward sign of the true circumcision of the heart, was

not deferred till the person gave proof that he was an Israelite indeed. But further, how do we know that an infant may not have the change of heart signified in Baptism? You may have lost children in infancy. Do you believe they are in heaven? Certainly, will be the reply, and so are all little ones dying in infancy. But they can never enter there with their depraved nature—for they must be born of the Spirit ere they can see the kingdom of God. Then it follows, that if half of our race dying in infancy are made happy with God, so many must be born anew of the Spirit in infancy, and how therefore dare any assert that a child cannot have the thing signified in Baptism? I do not know when that change takes place. I do not believe that it always takes place in the little infant in Baptism. But I do know that many infants are spiritually regenerated in infancy; therefore I have no hesitation in applying the outward sign to the infant, as well as to the adult believer. Suppose that I baptize a child, and it dies the next moment, it has as certainly received both the outward and the inward part of the Sacrament as St. Paul did, nor can any one deny this, without denying the salvation of departed infants. God only knows when the new birth of the Spirit has been experienced. Its outward sign we give according to his will to the children of his people, and to believing adults. Abraham received circumcision after he believed, and was justified, Isaac before he believed, and Ishmael when, so far as we know, he never believed. So now, infants receive the outward seal of the covenant ere they exercise faith.

Paul was baptized after he believed, and Simon Magus when, as we fear, he lived and died in the bonds of iniquity. Our business is to fix the covenant seal according to God's will, not to determine positively whether any are spiritually entitled to it, for that we can never know, in infant or adult.

4. From this brief statement, those who have neglected the baptism of their children will see some of the reasons which led us to present our offspring to God in that Sacrament. We believe that God gives our little ones some share in the privileges of his kingdom, just as every state does in its immunities, from their earliest years, and that putting them in possession of these is the surest means of securing to them the larger privileges thereof. Think of these things, and say whether it does not seem reasonable and scriptural to dedicate your little ones to God in Baptism. This is Christ's way of putting his hands upon them and blessing them, now that he can no longer do it in person; and would you not value that which Hebrew mothers so eagerly sought? You may say that you hesitate because you are afraid to take upon you the great promises which sponsors, in the Baptismal service, are required to make. But to this, we answer first, that a sponsor takes no promise upon himself at all in the baptism of an infant, for the promise is in the name of the child, by one acting in its behalf. The parent does not covenant that the child shall be a Christian, for that is more than any godfather or godmother could be pledged for, but the child acknowledges by the mouth of its sponsor that it is bound to

be a Christian. And secondly, although the obligations to bring the child up religiously are strongly insisted on in the Baptismal service, they are in reality made no stronger than before, because every parent is under the utmost obligations to train up his child for God, whether he acknowledges them by offering it in Baptism or no. Neglecting the Sacrament does not diminish the responsibility, nor attending to it increase it, except perhaps as giving a note for an honest debt increases the obligation to pay. /

You may urge again as an excuse for the neglect of your children's Baptism, that neither of its parents are professing Christians. To this we reply, that the right to Baptism is still the child's if either of the parents has been baptized, and even in the extreme case where both are unbaptized, the child may yet be presented. For suppose both parents were dead, might not a pious relative bring it to Baptism? and equally may it be done if they be spiritually dead. Here the wise provision of the Church, of godfathers and godmothers comes in, for if they are such as the Church intended they should be, persons who will exert a religious watchfulness over the child, they will be as substitutes for parents destitute of piety, or as helpers to such as possess it. The true course undoubtedly is to give yourselves first to God, and then your child, but if you do not the first, seek out some truly Christian friends, and let your little one, through them, enjoy the blessing of that Sacrament. And in obtaining sponsors, let me add, call not upon those whose great name or wealth may further some selfish earthly ob-

ject for your child, but look for such as will take the deepest interest in its spiritual welfare, and be truly godfathers and godmothers to it.

It may be, again, that you have now awakened to the importance of having your children baptized, but it has been deferred so long, that they are almost grown up, and you ask, whether it is not better, under such circumstances, to wait till they can answer for themselves. I should say, so important do I deem that Sacrament to them, that if they are not prepared to answer as adults, and are yet within your control, bring them as children, even if they are twelve or sixteen years of age, rather than have them live as aliens from the fold of Christ. They are yet under your religious teaching,—you can call upon them to hear sermons, and can perform the other duties which the Baptismal service supposes to belong to parents and sponsors, therefore you can yet act as sponsors for them in bringing them to Baptism.

It may be again, that, strangest of all, you are a full believer in infant Baptism, and a communicant, but have suffered your children to remain unbaptized, from mere carelessness. Remember Moses, whose neglect of the circumcision of his child led God to seek to slay him, even when he had just commissioned him to go and deliver Israel, and fear lest God smite you or your child for your contempt of his ordinance. If there be a blessing in infant Baptism, the earlier we seek it the more shall we show our sense of its value. Were the wise rubric against the delay of Baptism observed, it would not only evidence your high appre-

ciation of the Sacrament, but prevent the unseemly sights so often witnessed, when children far enough advanced to have the old Adam in them pretty largely developed, are handed, struggling and screaming, to the minister, to the destruction of all the solemnity of the service, instead of lying quietly in the arms, as they usually do when brought at the age specified by the Church. Bring them early, bring them with much of prayer, and asking the prayers of pious friends. The Holy Ghost descended on Jesus (not in Baptism, we may observe by the way, but after Baptism, as if to discountenance the idea that the Spirit is always infused in the water), while he prayed. Do not make the Baptism of your child an occasion of conviviality, nor ask your pastor to perform it at your own dwelling amid a festive party and a great display of liquors, for that will be likely to open the heavens above in a curse rather than a blessing, but bring it with much of previous prayer, and with the intercessions of friends, to God's own house, to share the supplications of his Church, and then God may own it as a child, in whom, through Christ, he is well pleased.

5. But I gladly turn from this part of my subject, or rather from this digression, to the case of those whom I am especially addressing,—the favored ones, who were early consecrated to God in Baptism. You have seen a part of the reasons which actuated your parents in presenting you for that Sacrament. Well do some of us remember the scene of your Baptism, and the earnestness with which we pleaded that you might live the rest of your lives according to that be-

ginning. We believe that God was pleased with the act, and that ever since you have received from him larger blessings for it. And we, as parents, have been endeavoring to realize for you the full benefit of that Sacrament. We have taught you the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, and all other things that a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health. Your earliest words were little prayers, and sentence by sentence we dictated to you as you knelt by our side, the petitions of lisping infancy. We have brought you to God's house to hear sermons. The sponsors whom we associated with us have often prayed for you, and shown their interest in your spiritual welfare. For many a good religious habit you are indebted to your parents, and for a correct doctrinal knowledge of God's holy word. And now our work is chiefly, perhaps wholly done. You have come to years of discretion, and learned what your godfathers and godmothers promised for you. What is to be your course? What your parents' reward? Did they do right in bringing you to Baptism? Do you think that you are verily bound to believe and do as they promised for you? Do you feel greatly indebted to them for religious culture and habits? And do you heartily thank your heavenly Father, that he permitted you in childhood to be brought into covenant relations with him, and for all the baptismal grace which was given in, or has followed from, that holy Sacrament? Then show forth your gratitude by seeking to come forward with full preparation of heart, to renew your baptismal engagements in your own name, in the rite of Confirmation.



## SERMON VIII.

## CONFIRMATION.

“Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.”—*Acts viii. 17.*

**N**EXT in order in our course is the rite of Confirmation.

To those who have been brought up in the Episcopal faith, and are well acquainted with our forms, little that is new can be advanced upon this subject; but there are others less familiar with our usages, and there are the young, a new generation of whom comes up to be instructed at every succeeding visit of the Bishop, for whose benefit it is desirable to dwell briefly upon the various points connected with the administration of this rite.

1. And *first*, we may inquire as to the *nature* and *design* of Confirmation.

We do not regard it as a sacrament, as the Romanists do. A Sacrament, says Bishop Burnet, is an institution of Christ, in which some material thing is sanctified by the use of some form or words, in and by which federal acts of religion do pass on both sides; on ours, by stipulations, professions, or vows; and on God's, by his secret assistance; by these we are also united to the body of Christ, which is the Church. Thus, for instance, in Baptism, there is matter, viz., in water;—there is the form, I baptize thee in the name

of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;—there is an institution by Christ, when he said, Go and baptize;—and there is the federal union with the Church, for we are all baptized into one body. But Confirmation has no express institution by Christ or his apostles—no material element is used, nor is it a federal rite;—hence, our articles declare that it is not a sacrament, giving that name only to Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The Romanists, to meet this objection, have appointed a material element, or Chrism, to be used in Confirmation. It is composed of oil olive, and balm, and is applied to the forehead of the person confirmed, with these words, "I sign thee with the sign of the Cross, and confirm thee with the Chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." But as this Chrism is an invention of their own, it does not give to Confirmation the title of a sacrament.

Confirmation, with us, is simply a renewing of our baptismal engagements in the presence of the congregation, with the laying on of hands by the Bishop, and with prayer for the Holy Spirit. In Baptism, we are supposed to enter into covenant with God. But that sacrament is administered at divers times and places—in private houses, and on the sick-bed—by inferior ministers, or even by laymen—and to infants or adults. The design of Confirmation is, to bring all to a solemn, public ratification of their vows, before God's chief minister, in the presence of his people, with prayer for a blessing. Now, every one must see the propriety of such a rite; especially, that those baptized in infancy,

should, by some act of their own, when they come to riper years, take upon themselves the obligations of Baptism ; and also, that it must be profitable for those baptized in maturer age, to be thus publicly and solemnly reminded of that vow which binds them to Christ, with prayers that they may keep it. Indeed, few ever witnessed a Confirmation without being favorably impressed with its solemnity, its evident use and advantages.

2. We may next notice the *authority* on which Confirmation rests.

In the eighth chapter of Acts, we read that Philip, a deacon, went down to Samaria, and so preached the word that great numbers believed, and were baptized. When the apostles at Jerusalem heard this, they sent two of their own company, Peter and John, who, when they were come down, prayed for these converts, that they might receive the Holy Ghost, for as yet he had fallen on none of them : only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. Here, Baptism was conferred by an inferior minister, and then followed by the laying on of the hands of the apostles, the highest order of the ministry, with prayer for the larger gifts of the Holy Spirit. And this was not a single example only, for in the nineteenth of Acts, we read that St. Paul laid hands on some who had been baptized, and they received the Holy Ghost. And in the sixth of Hebrews, St. Paul, speaking of the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, mentions Baptism and the laying on of hands, in such order as to seem to

show that the latter usually succeeded the former. These examples we profess to follow in Confirmation, wherein the baptized receive the imposition of the Bishop's hands, with prayer for the gifts of the Holy Ghost. It is said by an eminent Presbyterian divine,\* that these examples give no sanction to our practice of Confirmation, because the apostles conferred miraculous gifts, and as our Bishops do not pretend to impart these, they can plead no authority from hence. But so, we reply, did the apostles in ordaining ministers confer miraculous powers, and yet no denomination ceases to ordain, because miraculous gifts are not now imparted. We retain both Ordination and Confirmation, looking only for the gifts of the Spirit which yet belong to the Church of Christ. Nor is it likely that *all* on whom the apostles laid hands received the supernatural gifts of the Spirit, or that all the baptized at Samaria, including men and women, together with Simon Magus, had extraordinary powers imparted to them; but only such of them as God meant to call to the work of the ministry, while others had the lesser gifts of the Spirit, or, as in the case of Simon, none at all, save such as Judas or Balaam might have had. We, as Episcopalians, however, may be prejudiced in favor of our rite of Confirmation, and those under Puritan influence may be prejudiced against it; it is well, therefore, to see how the matter appears to those who are under no such bias on either side. And we find that Kuinoel, an able German expositor, uses this lan-

\* Rev. Dr. Barnes' Notes on Acts .viii.

guage: "The apostles seem to have laid down a rule that converts, after being baptized and catechized, should have the imposition of hands, accompanied with prayer, in order to their receiving the gifts of the Holy Spirit."

If now it appear that such a practice existed soon after the apostles' days, it will further prove the apostolic authority of Confirmation; for the practice, immediately after a code is given, is the best interpreter of its meaning. And, to cite only a few of the authorities which might be presented, Jerome, in the Fourth century, says that "the custom of the whole Christian world recommends Confirmation." St. Augustine pleads for Confirmation, though he says "miraculous gifts do not now attend it, as in the apostles' days." And Jerome further says: "That as for those who were baptized afar off, in the lesser towns and villages, by Presbyters and Deacons, the Bishop travels out to them, to lay hands on them, and to invoke the Holy Ghost;" and then he adds, "Do you ask where this is written? In the Acts of the Apostles; although, if there were no authority of Scripture for it, the consent of the whole world, in this particular, would have the force of a command." Thus, in the year 331, the whole Christian world had received Confirmation as an apostolic practice, and so it continued to be received until the Reformation, when some bodies of Christians allowed it to fall into disuse, probably, because, as they had rejected Episcopacy, they had no Bishop to administer it. The Lutheran Church, however, retains it. John Calvin owned it to be primitive and useful.

Baxter wrote a long treatise in defence of it. And in the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, some years since, a committee reported, that "it appears that a rite, called Confirmation, was administered by the hand of the Bishop, Minister, or Elder, together with prayer, on baptized children of a certain age." This rite they speak of with approbation, "as existing in the primitive Church in her purest days, and valuable as a preparative for the Lord's Supper." Such testimony, from those who have suffered Confirmation to drop out of their system, is important in establishing the primitive and Scriptural authority of the rite, and showing that, in the practical working of their system, they feel the want of it.

3. Again, we may notice some *mistakes* with regard to Confirmation.

This rite has been supposed by some, who have been baptized and educated in other denominations, to throw disparagement upon their Baptism, as if Confirmation by our bishops was to eke out, or make up for the invalidity of sectarian Baptism, and as they are satisfied with the baptismal dedication made by their pious parents, they are not willing to throw any such slight upon their memory or their faith. But this is a mistake. We confirm all who were baptized in our own Church, as well as those baptized in other denominations, and, of course, mean to throw no slight upon Baptism in either case. And, besides, Confirmation is a confirming of baptism already received, not a re-baptizing, nor an eking out of baptism. If there had been no baptism, there would be nothing to

confirm. So that in fact, when our Bishops confirm all who have been baptized in any denomination, and when our Ministers present them for Confirmation, instead of being any slight upon their Baptism, it is the strongest testimony we could give in favor of it, since it is a public recognition of its validity by our highest authorities. We may have those among us who have been thus baptized and educated in another denomination, but are now communicants, or desirous of becoming such, with us, who may regard Confirmation as one of the peculiarities of Episcopacy, about which they have not made up their minds. Let them think of the evidence for its Apostolical and primitive character, which has been adduced; let them remember that, if satisfied with their own baptism, our Church neither in Confirmation nor elsewhere disparages it; and then let them consider their duty in those new church relations upon which they have entered. One of our rubrics requires all who are admitted to the Communion to have been confirmed, or to be willing to be confirmed when opportunity may be had. Of course, such as come among us with an intelligent, honest preference for our institutions, would wish to comply with all the Church's requirements, unless there be some conscientious scruple against them. And we think no pious mind can find aught objectionable in the Confirmation service. It can surely harm no one to renew his engagements to be the Lord's, nor to receive the laying on of the Bishop's hands with prayer for the Spirit's gifts, so that, even if not convinced of the

Scriptural authority of the rite, it would seem as if no Christian could object to receive it, out of a decent compliance with the usages of the Church with which he has chosen to connect himself. It may be urged, that there is no propriety in asking those baptized in other denominations to be confirmed, since having had no godfathers or sponsors in their baptism, they cannot be said to ratify the promises made by their godfathers. But the idea of Baptism is every where the same. It is entering into covenant with God; and when infants are brought to baptism in other denominations, the parents virtually make the same promises that are made in our service. If it be asked, whether it is advisable for those who have been baptized in another denomination to be re-baptized before coming to Confirmation, we reply, that our Church has never required it, nor does it seem desirable. All of our Bishops confirm without scruple those who have not been Episcopally baptized;—of course this has settled the question of the validity of such Baptisms, and it would show presumption or a weak mind, to disturb a practice so long established.

There is sometimes also a mistaken feeling on the part of those who are advanced in years, but have never been confirmed, as if Confirmation were a rite for the young, and not for the old. There are certain expressions in the Liturgy, that have contributed to this misconception. In the Baptismal office it is said, that the baptized are to be brought to the Bishop to be confirmed by him, so soon as they can say the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Command-



ments, and are sufficiently instructed in the other parts of the Church Catechism. And again, in the Confirmation Office, it is said that none shall be confirmed, but such as can answer certain questions in the Catechism. Hence persons in mature years have thought that to be confirmed was placing themselves in a ridiculous and mortifying position by classing themselves among young children who have just learned the Catechism, and we are sometimes asked, whether the gray-headed candidate must be examined in his Catechism.

The reply to all this is easy. In the Romish Church, children of seven years of age are confirmed. Our Prayer-Book, therefore, which was remodelled at the Reformation, intended to guard against the error of bringing such very young children to Confirmation, by requiring that they should be thoroughly instructed in the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, so that these expressions were not designed to exclude the old, but to shut out those who are so young as not to be able to understand what they are about to do. The service was not intended to drive away those who have the highest qualifications, but to limit these particulars specified as the lowest qualifications for admission. The office in the Prayer-Book has remained unchanged for many years; of course, in some points, it is not perfectly adapted to the present state of things, though it is well to let the service stand as it is, to guard against any new introduction of the Popish errors it was intended to meet. But it will be seen, that the mature in years,

and the aged, ought not to shrink from Confirmation as something for the young alone, any more than to be ashamed of Baptism, of which it is a confirming, if they had not been baptized in infancy; or of taking up any duty to God late in life, which they had before neglected. *All* the Samaritans who had been baptized, received the laying on of hands, of whatever age they may have been; and indeed, one great difference between apostolic and modern Confirmation, is, that the former was chiefly for those baptized in adult years while the latter is chiefly for those baptized in infancy. The reason is obvious. The first converts were of mature years, and their children, if baptized with them, would of course not be old enough to confirm at the same time their Baptismal engagements. If the Gospel now were preached in a heathen country, the first Baptisms would be chiefly, and the first Confirmations wholly of adults, but afterwards, as children grew up, Confirmation would chiefly be of those baptized in infancy. In this country the confirmed are, for the most part, those who have come to years of maturity or advanced in life, while in England they are usually the very young, and, we think, our confirmations are the most Scriptural and impressive, not but that we should be glad to see all the young, when they reach a proper age, becoming recipients of this rite, if prepared; but, because we fear that there they may come merely because of the proper age, whether spiritually qualified or not; while here, we trust, both the age and the preparation are regarded in the reception of the rite.

## SERMON IX.

## CONFIRMATION.

"Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost."—*Acts viii. 17.*

WE may notice as our next subject of inquiry, the qualifications for receiving Confirmation. These we may say, generally, are those required for Baptism and the Lord's Supper, or such as have already been stated as requisite for a public confession of Christ.

But we observe more particularly, that the loose notions and practice which once existed in the Church, when children, merely because they had arrived at a certain age, were urged to come forward to Confirmation, with little regard to their spiritual attainments, are passing away. It is not a rite which the giddy votaries of worldly pleasure may step aside for a moment to participate in, and then go on in their course of vanity,—a sort of debt which they owe to their parents rather than to the Lord, and which they may discharge to relieve their parents, without much religious feeling on their own part;—but it is a public profession of religion, and should be based upon vital piety, and made with deliberation, prayer, and the resolution to live a Christian life. The Church has no forms for the heartless and insincere. She calls Confirmation a solemn renewal of the baptismal vow, addresses the confirmed as regenerate and forgiven,

and prays that they may daily increase in God's Holy Spirit, more and more, until they come to his everlasting kingdom. Not to pacify conscience, not to gratify parents, not upon the solicitations of ministers, should we come forward, but because our own hearts choose God's service and draw us to engage in it.

But premising this, we may remark that, while true piety is the only warrant for a public profession of religion, yet the very lowest degree of true piety, should encourage us to make it. The standard of *attainment* in holiness should ever be placed high,—but the standard for a *profession* of religion should be low, so that while all are incited to the most exalted personal piety, none may be excluded from the number of Christ's disciples, who have that piety in its smallest measure. Preaching and pastoral intercourse have often aimed at, or produced the opposite result, inso-much that while strict requirements for a public profession have been demanded, so as to keep many truly pious and humble believers from making it, yet, when the profession has once been made, it has seemed as if all were gained, and men might live carelessly, with little effort after holiness. To fence the door of the Church, with small attention to those within the fold, has been too much the aim, as if admission to Church membership were the all-important step in the Christian life. The result has been, that many whom Christ would receive, have been shut out from Church privileges, and have mourned in secret over their exclusion, because they were judged not to have attained, to qualify them for participation, a degree of perfectness

supposed to be requisite, and which these very privileges would have helped them to gain. Therefore, we say, that when a man indulges the hope that he has some measure of the Christian spirit, though deeply conscious of many defects and of much unworthiness, he should, instead of waiting for perfection ere he comes to God's altar, come to it that he may go on to perfection. Christ will never cast off those who have true faith, though it be as a grain of mustard seed. He brake not the bruised reed, nor quenched the smoking flax. He never sent away any sincere seeker because his faith was weak or his piety defective, but received such as his disciples, and then instructed them to make them more perfect disciples. It is sometimes objected to certain ministers, that they *preach* a very strait and self-denying religion, and yet are very free and liberal in admitting to a profession of it. This is as it should be. Christ proclaimed the purest holiness, and a perfect law, while he permitted poor unworthy sinners freely to come to him. And the Church has wisely followed this example, in making her rubrics and tests for admission to sacraments and privileges as low as possible in their requirements, so low indeed, as to awaken the cavils of the unreflecting.

Nor let any one urge that such views as these will encourage those who have no true fitness for it, to make a public profession of religion. We invite not the thoughtless and the unregenerate while they continue impenitent to come to God's altar, but we will receive the weakest disciple whom we have reason to hope God accepts, as the Saviour received Nicodemus,

who, timid and faithless at first, afterwards exceeded apostles themselves in boldness for Christ. We are persuaded that many of this class who are yet halting and fearful, would have long since become bright and happy Christians had they been encouraged to come forward to sacraments. We will admit a babe in Christ, and nourish him to the stature of a man. We will receive the weak and fearful into the Church, and there seek to make them firm and strong in the faith. We will consider the Church as a nursery constructed on purpose for tender plants, a fold contrived expressly for feeble lambs and sheep; and if this be deemed wrong we will appeal to the example of him who could behold a prodigal afar off, and who never cast out those who came to him.

We can now answer more distinctly the question, who are prepared to receive Confirmation? All, we reply, who have the least well-founded hope of acceptance with God, or that they should be admitted to his presence in glory, if called away by death. Do they ask how they may know themselves to have even the lowest measure of piety? We can only point them, in reply, to such familiar marks as these: Do they love and practise secret prayer? do they love the society of Christians, and the house and word of God? do they strive to overcome every sin, and to live a life of holiness? and, do they, amid many doubts and fears, and with a deep sense of unworthiness, seek to renounce all dependence on their own righteousness, and look alone to Christ as their Saviour? If so, they are such as God calls to the privileges of His Church. Let them arise and enjoy them.

2. We may remark further, that parents who have children of the right age to be confirmed, ought to encourage them to come forward, if they give the least evidence of piety. A Christian parent, who is constantly with his children, will be able to judge more correctly of their religious character, than any minister or other person, and great deference is due to his judgment. But let him not judge harshly, nor expect too much from them. Let him not, because he sees all their childish levity, and has his patience and temper tried by their heedlessness, conclude hastily and severely that they have no true piety. Old Christians have their inconsistencies, and it may be expected that the young will have theirs. If, amid all their levity, they seem to manifest conscientiousness, a love of prayer and of religious duties, and a disposition to shun evil company, cherish that germ of piety, by leading them to the altar of God for more grace. If the tiny bud half hidden by leaves and blossoms be broken, there will be no fruit on the stem for that year,—so the little beginnings of piety, if despised, because overlaid with the exuberance of youth, may be checked for a long season after. Many a person has said that if his early impressions had been encouraged, he should have been a decided Christian years before he took upon him the vows of a religious life; but his youthful piety was harshly judged, because old heads did not find in it all the wrinkles and marks of their own religious experience. It is difficult to know when to encourage and when to restrain,—to distinguish between mere childish impulse and settled principle,—

but our rule should be to lean to the side of charity, and to be more afraid of discouraging, than of too hastily encouraging an early public profession.

3. There may be some desirous of receiving Confirmation, who do not feel quite prepared to approach the Lord's table, and who wish to know what their duty is? We reply, that our Church regards Confirmation as a preparatory step to the Communion, but there may be those, intending at an early period to go to the Lord's table, yet not satisfied to do so at once, who may with propriety be confirmed. If they have no thought of becoming communicants, of course they should not think of being confirmed; because it would be a strange inconsistency to say, when confirmed, that they renew their baptismal engagement to endeavor to keep *all* God's commandments, when, at the very time, they have no intention of keeping that one which says, "do this in remembrance of me." But if their purpose is to go to the Lord's table at an early subsequent opportunity, though not perhaps the first that may occur, let them be confirmed, for this will help to satisfy their doubts and to strengthen their faith. Let them go forward as far as their way is clear, and the God whom they seek to serve may open it for their further advance. Confirmation is not often administered in our churches, and they may not soon have another opportunity of receiving it, whereas the Lord's Supper is administered every month. Still, the general rule should be, to seek so to come to the former, as at the first opportunity thereafter to receive the latter.

And, we may ask, where are those who, years ago,



renewed their baptismal covenant, but, as yet, neglect the table of the Lord? "Ye are witnesses against yourselves, that ye have chosen the Lord, to serve him." Pay your vows.

Such as are already communicants, but have not been confirmed, should feel in duty bound to embrace the first opportunity for compliance with the rules of the Church, and to seek the blessing of this apostolic institution for their souls. Unbaptized adults who mean to be confirmed, should, as early as practicable, receive the sacrament of admission into the fold of Christ. It is made the duty of all who are desirous of Confirmation, to hand in their names to the Rector of the parish previous to the visit of the Bishop. The usual method, in most congregations, is for the minister to make an early announcement of that visit, that the people may, in the meanwhile, consider their duty, and then to ask them just before the time, after they have had opportunity for much self-examination and prayer, and after much instruction from the pulpit, to notify their decision, if favorable, to the Rector. Personal conversation with each individual candidate, especially in a large parish, is out of the question, and would be of but little use if it could be had, except in cases where there are peculiar difficulties in which pastoral advice may be profitable, where, no doubt, it will be gladly given. Compare the views here presented with God's Word, and with your qualifications, and examine yourselves; for making up your own judgment on your own case, is a responsibility which no one can take from you.

It will be seen that my aim has been to give the largest encouragement, consistent with God's Word, to candidates for Confirmation, and our prayer should be, that not one with the least degree of fitness for it may be excluded, nor one every way unfit admitted, to its solemn vows.

I would add, that, at every season for the administration of the rite, we need the co-operation of all interested, to aid in preparing for it. In a large congregation, it is often impossible to visit every individual to ascertain whether he has been confirmed, or intends to be so. And many who may have their serious purposes, but wait to be addressed by their minister, will be passed over, unless they themselves, or their friends, will make known their wishes to the Rector. All Christians should feel that there is something for them to do when Confirmation has been announced.

That which has here been expressed is the substance of what your Rector would say in private conversation with you on the subject of Confirmation. Let it have your prayerful consideration, and then, if prepared, give your names as candidates, without further visit or inquiry. The names should be written out in full, in order to be handed to the Bishop. It should be noted, also, by those who have never witnessed a Confirmation, that females come forward to it with their heads uncovered, and that all the candidates come together and remain at the chancel till the service is completed.

5. Our last point will be the motives which should induce you to prepare for and to receive Confirmation.

If, as we think it has been proved, Confirmation is a following of apostolic usage, *that* is a consideration to bind the conscience of the true follower of Jesus. It is one that may have little weight in this age of sturdy independence and self-sufficiency. What virtue, it may be asked, is there in the laying on of a Bishop's hands? I must work out my salvation for myself, nor do I conceive that there is any great efficacy in the hands of a good man, much less of a bad, to bless my soul. The efficacy of sacraments and ceremonies is in God's appointment or approval, and the blessing will come in them to all who duly receive them, whether the Bishop be good or bad; and they who have their Master's Spirit will follow his example who received baptism from John, and joined in worship where Caiaphas presided, because thus it became him to fulfil all righteousness. Such as devoutly and with faithful preparation have the imposition of hands, amid the prayers of a whole congregation, will most assuredly enjoy the communication of the Holy Spirit's gifts, not in their perceptible and miraculous operations, but to strengthen good resolutions, and to aid in the contest with sin. Many have acknowledged such a blessing, and have looked back to their Confirmation as one of the most solemn and profitable events in their whole lives.

And there is the special advantage, in a Confirmation season, that it brings to a decision minds long wavering and irresolute in the concerns of the soul. Many who do not openly confess Christ before men, are aiming to maintain a kind of secret service of their God,

which the world is to know nothing of. They have their private devotions, and their cherished hopes, and a vague persuasion that they are entitled to the Christian name on account of these secret services. But God demands the public confession of Christ, and with reason, because it not only honors him, but strengthens ourselves. A purpose in the heart becomes more firm by being expressed, for what we have *said* we *would* do, we feel more strongly that we *must* do. It would be an immense advantage to multitudes who are attempting to maintain this concealed service of Christ, if they could decide to come out openly as the avowed followers of the Saviour. One breathes more freely when he has made this decision. He looks up to God with more confidence in prayer, and he receives a larger blessing from the God whom he is not ashamed to own. From the moment of any public dedication to Christ, the individual goes forward with greater singleness and energy of purpose, as one saying to himself—the die is cast, I have given myself to God, henceforth let me live to him. And a time of Confirmation is a favored season for bringing indecision to a close. It is not administered at all times, like Baptism, nor frequently like the Lord's Supper, so that one may say that if he neglects it now, it is only a month or so; but it comes at such wide intervals that he feels it is more like rejecting Christ altogether, and that the question is one of neglect of duty for a year or years, which he cannot, therefore, so lightly dismiss. It is a season of the special strivings of the Holy Ghost, and all should take heed lest they grieve him away. Many, when

the question of being confirmed has been presented to them, have thought seriously of it for a time, but could not resolve to give up the world, who, before another opportunity has presented itself, have been called into the world of spirits, so that that proved their final rejection of offered salvation. Beware, lest ye grieve the Holy Spirit of God.

Other motives might be dwelt upon, yet as they belong not especially to Confirmation, but are common to any public confession of Christ, they will be found elsewhere in their appropriate place.

In conclusion, the appeal is made to all of you who have not received this apostolic rite, to embrace the first opportunity of enjoying that privilege. You will meet the appeal, perhaps, with an assertion of your unfitness and unworthiness. Many will exclaim; with a sort of holy horror—What does the minister mean by urging those who have not a change of heart to make a public profession of religion? We must have a great change, they say, ere we can be meet for such a duty, or to receive the sacraments of Christ's Church. And so they make this seemingly pious regard for the sacraments, and this high sense of the qualifications for their due reception, an excuse for neglecting them. Why do they not *seek* a change of heart, then, if they need it, instead of making the want of it a plea for neglect of duty to God? Before the next administration of Confirmation, they may, by Divine grace sought in earnest prayer, gain that change which they want to render them meet to receive it. If they were on a sick bed, they would think it strange to be told that

they could not become prepared for death because they had but a few days to live ; much more may they prepare for sacraments, in a short time, when in all the vigor of health and life. And what is a change of heart ? It is such an alteration in the dispositions as will bring those who neglect their duty to God, disobey his commands, and love not his service, to yield themselves, with all the soul, to love and serve him. And this is the very thing we are seeking to persuade you to do. Pray for a disposition which will make you willing to take up your cross and follow Christ—to confess him in Confirmation and in his sacraments—to trust in his righteousness, and to live a life of holiness—and that will be the change of heart which you need. But do not mock God, nor deceive your own selves, by sitting idly still, and pleading your want of that change.

The only excuse which is worthy of any consideration, is that of those who have so deep a consciousness of their sinfulness and unworthiness, that they dare not make any public confession of Christ, and such a sense of their weakness, that they fear they shall dishonor it if it be made. We point them to the Saviour. It is in his merits alone that we can be accepted in any performance, and by his grace alone that we can serve him. As a ground of hope and a source of strength, he is all-sufficient. It is one thing to look at solemn duties seriously, and another to look at them with discouraged feeling. The first is what every wise man would do—the last is the spirit of the timid and fearful, who shrink from obligations because of difficulties. In religious, as well as in worldly concerns, true

greatness, wisdom, and heroism are never seen, save in the man who can say, in cases where it is his duty to act:—I have considered the responsibility, I dread it; nevertheless, I am ready to take it upon myself, and I pray for strength to bear it. That is the spirit which triumphs over difficulties in the affairs of this life, and also in the service of God. Say, then, “I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only.”



## SERMON X.

### THE LORD'S SUPPER.

“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins.”—*St. Matt.* 26: 26-28.

**T**WO of the ways in which a Confession of Christ is to be made, have been considered in the Discourses upon Baptism and Confirmation.

We now go on to the Lord's Supper, in which there is the same profession, and for which similar qualifications are required, insomuch that the questions in the Baptismal Service might be addressed with equal propriety to candidates for Baptism, Confirmation, or the Holy Communion.

1. We will first notice the scriptural history of the institution of the Lord's Supper, in order to understand its nature and design.

It is usual and reasonable to perpetuate great events by enduring monuments. When Creation was completed, the Sabbath was appointed to commemorate the work, and when the Jews were delivered from Egypt the Passover became the memorial of their redemption. Our Saviour acted upon the same principle in instituting the Eucharist. He was about to die as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Before his suffering therefore, he would devise a means of ever keeping that great expiation vividly in remembrance. As the Passover had prefigured His death, so the Lord's Supper should commemorate it. And as it was fitting that the elements used in one should be chosen for the other, he took bread and wine, which were both employed in the Passover, and with these constituted His new Sacrament. Bread, the most general and wholesome article of food, and wine, of the red color made in Palestine, an apt emblem of His blood, as well as a most nourishing cordial, when obtained in its purity, were both expressive representatives of that health and strength which are drawn from Christ. Taking the bread our Lord gave thanks, and blessed it—thus consecrating it to a sacramental use. He brake it, to show that His body was to be broken on the cross. He gave it to his disciples, saying, Take, eat ;—in token that they were to rely upon Christ's atonement, and participate in its hopes and benefits. He said to them, This is my body,—that is.



this represents my body. St. Paul, writing nearly thirty years after, not only gives the words, do this in remembrance of me ; but adds, as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye show the Lord's death till he come ; which teaches us that the Lord's Supper was designed as a memorial of Christ, and also to be of perpetual obligation. After this he took the cup, and again giving thanks, He gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it, for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins ;—that is, this represents my blood, which, according to the new Covenant of the Gospel, was shed for the forgiveness of sins, and by drinking whereof they were to acknowledge their hope of salvation through His atoning blood.

Such is the simple history of this transaction, and it is wonderful that so many mistakes have been grafted upon it. The grossest of these errors, transubstantiation, supposes, that after consecration, the bread and wine no longer remain, but are changed into the real body and blood of Christ, which, as our article asserts, is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture. When our Lord said, This is my body, he used a form of expression with which the disciples were familiar, and he meant, this represents my body ; as when Moses said, it is the Lord's Passover, he meant, it represented the Lord's Passover ; or when it is said, that Rock was Christ, it signifies that it represented Christ. How could the disciples imagine their Lord meant that his body and blood were in those elements when they saw Him sitting by their side ? Rightly therefore does our Church call the elements bread

and wine after their Consecration, and teach that Christ is present in them, not literally and corporeally, but after a spiritual and heavenly manner, and to the eye of faith. The Saviour's body is in heaven, to remain there till the day of judgment, but he is spiritually present when we worship him in our closets, or in his house, and it is in the same way, and only in the same way, though in a higher degree, that he is present with us at his table. Scripture makes no distinction between the manner of his presence in the Sacrament, and in any other act of worship or privilege of his people.

We notice in the narrative, that our Lord gave both the bread and the wine to his disciples, and St. Paul speaks of all at Corinth as partaking both of the cup and bread. The Romanists give only the bread to the laity, partly on the plea that as the real body of Christ is in every particle of the elements, he who receives it in one kind has no need of receiving the other, and partly because of a superstitious fear lest some of the sacred blood should be spilled in the careless handling of the cup, but really from a desire to magnify the priests by giving them a superiority to the laity in receiving in both kinds. One lie usually leads to many others, as we see in transubstantiation and its kindred errors.

The time or posture for the administration of the Lord's Supper is not fixed in the Scripture narrative. It was probably first received in a reclining posture. We take it kneeling, not in adoration of the elements, but because that is the posture of prayer, and we

suppose all will participate with a prayerful frame of mind. The first supper was eaten as late perhaps as ten or eleven in the night of our Lord's betrayal ; but elsewhere in Scripture the breaking of bread was at other hours, so that the time is of no consequence. We choose for the Sacrament the morning, because we are then freshest for devotion, and can give to God the vigor of our powers. How often the Lord's Supper should be administered does not appear from the inspired page, but general usage among Protestants has fixed it at once a month. When it is more frequent, as upon every Lord's day and every Saint's day, men are apt to withdraw from it occasionally, on the plea that they cannot always commune when the communion comes so often, and so get in the habit of turning their backs upon it, perhaps for months together, whereas if it were but once a month they might never think of absenting themselves. And where the Sacrament is administered but once a year, it becomes a season for a great annual solemnity, passing too much out of mind for the rest of the year, and also making a wide interval for those who are unavoidably absent from the yearly celebration, ere they can enjoy the privilege of communing. That which general usage in the Church has settled upon as best, is rarely departed from without the usual consequences of rashness and folly.

From this glance at the scriptural history of the Lord's Supper, we may gather its nature and design.

Its great end was undoubtedly to be a memorial of Christ's death and sacrifice. So the Saviour himself

instructs us, Do this in remembrance of me. And the idea most frequently repeated in our Communion service is, that it is a perpetual memory of his precious death and sacrifice until his coming again. No less than eleven times is that idea repeated in the body of the service, while of the short address to each participant, repeated hundreds of times at each celebration if hundreds are present, one half consists in the statement of Christ's death for us, and the other in an exhortation to remember it with thankfulness.

A second design of the Lord's Supper was, to be, with Baptism, a badge of discipleship and a way of confessing Christ before men. Thus the early converts continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers.

A third purpose was to be a sign and means of our union and communion with Christ; for the cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? As bread becomes incorporate with our bodies and strengthens them, so do spiritual life and strength flow to us from Christ's body and blood, assuring us, as we feed upon them, that, we are very members incorporate in his mystical body, which is the blessed company of all faithful people.

The Lord's Supper is also a sign of our union with each other, and a means of promoting Christian fellowship, for as we all eat of one loaf and drink of one cup, we are reminded that we are alike dependent as sinners upon the same Saviour, and bound to exercise

love towards one another. We, being many, are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread. No person can rightly come to the Lord's Supper but as he is in charity with all men, nor retire from it without deepened kindness and affection.

The Lord's Supper is further a seal of the forgiveness of our sins. God covenants, for the merits and death of his Son, to pardon the sins of all who believe in him. In the Sacrament we profess our belief, and the taking of it, is, therefore, a public seal of our forgiveness.

Again, the Lord's Supper is a means of grace. None of God's appointments are mere empty signs, least of all the Sacrament of Christ's death. The first disciples are said to have broken bread with gladness and praise. And if they who eat and drink unworthily eat and drink damnation to themselves, we may infer that they who eat and drink worthily may do it to their salvation. The Lord's Supper is not, however, a means of grace to the openly wicked. None but those supposed to be true disciples received it at first, none others should now receive it, for why should one feed on the elements with his mouth who does not feed on Christ in his heart. Not that those should be excluded whose faith is weak and imperfect, for to them it is a means of acquiring greater strength and clearer hope, and to turn from the Lord's table because they have not attained to that perfectness they desire, would be like turning from a wholesome meal because faint and exhausted with hunger. Many a one, who had long walked in darkness, has found that

obedience to the Saviour's dying command has brought the peace for which he sighed. Our Church, therefore, very justly repels only open and notorious evil liver, blasphemers of God, hinderers and slanderers of his word, adulterers, or such as live in malice or envy, or any other grievous crime, until they repent and amend; but extends to the penitent, believing, and obedient, though imperfect still, the invitation to draw nigh and receive that holy Sacrament to their comfort. And the experience of all Christians testifies, that there is no means of grace through which God communicates his blessings so largely as in the Eucharist. There they realize most deeply their sinfulness, and at the same time the power and willingness of Christ to save. At the sacred table their holiest resolutions are formed—their warmest love to God and man enkindled, and more of heaven gathers around a Communion season than earth elsewhere affords. Nor can it be doubted, that to those who draw near aright, Christ imparts in that Sacrament, not indeed his real body and blood, but all the benefits of that great atonement made by his body and blood on the cross, so that in this sense the body and blood of Christ are truly taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper.

From this view of the history and design of the Holy Communion, we may suppose that an intelligent and devout Christian, on a Sacramental morning would be filled with thoughts and feelings something like these. I believe, he will say, that the only hope of a sinner is in the sacrifice and death of the Son of God.

I regard the Lord's Supper as a standing memorial of his great atonement, and participate as an expression of my entire trust in him. When the bread is broken, I remember how Christ's body was broken on the cross for me. When the wine is poured out, I think of his blood shed on Calvary. When I draw nigh the Lord's table, it is with utter renunciation of all worthiness in myself, with penitence and humility. When I take the elements into my hand, I say, so would my faith lay hold on a crucified Saviour. As I eat and drink, I say, so would I now receive Christ's body and blood offered in the great atonement, praying that they may indeed preserve my body and soul to everlasting life. When I retire to my seat it is with thankfulness for the privilege I have enjoyed. When I see my fellow Christians going forward, I love them more as partakers with me in a common hope and looking for a common heaven. When I behold others turning from that sacred feast I grieve for them, and pray that they may be brought to repentance and a better mind. And I leave God's house after the reception of this Sacrament with renewed consecration and strength, feeling that I have been every way benefited and blessed by the high and holy privilege.

Such are some of the exercises of every true Christian on a Communion morning, usually preceded by special devotions during the previous week, and followed by earnest prayers and efforts to lead a holier life. What must be the effect then, of such a Sacrament, administered every month? Can it be otherwise than exceedingly profitable? May we not rea-

sonably expect that the divine Saviour as he looks upon a company thus gathered in obedience to his command, will draw near with his special blessing? That blessing you, my hearers, lose, while you live in neglect of that holy Sacrament. It seems like turning away from Calvary itself, to turn from the Lord's table, for this is his own representation of the scenes of Calvary. It is like saying, I have no part in the precious death and sacrifice of the Son of God, and therefore cannot participate in the outward expression of hope in him. You will not deny that Christ has enjoined this duty, and that too, under the most solemn and affecting circumstances. You know that he expects it of you, and that a blessing is in it. How do you satisfy yourselves, then, in your neglect? How can you, sober, church-going people, professing to believe and reverence all that is in the Bible, walk down these aisles when you are invited to go up to God's table? How do you pacify conscience? How is your Saviour satisfied? All that subterfuge, and excuse, which you offer to us, weighs nothing, you know, with him. Go and tell the Saviour, who bled for you, to his face, as you do us, that you are not ready—that you do not love him enough—that your heart is too much in the world to commune at his table—will he receive it as an excuse? He will say to you, that he requires only a reasonable service, which his grace will enable you to perform, and that you are guilty of a cruel slight and contempt of him in neglecting it. As his voice follows you when you retire from God's house, saying, Do this in remembrance of me, your



own seems to come back, saying; I will not, O Saviour, do it in remembrance of thee. If you could truly assert, I cannot—we should not have a word to offer, save of pity for your hard lot; but when in effect, it is saying, I will not—every step down these aisles tramples under foot the Son of God,—every movement proclaims with Jewish priests, Away with him, let him be crucified.

3. The general preparation for the Lord's Supper is included in the answers in the Baptismal service already considered, and is also admirably summed up in the exhortation before the confession in the Communion office. Special preparation should also be made in each week preceding Communion, and our comfort and profit will usually be in proportion to the faithfulness of our special exercises, though if hindered in them we should never turn away from the Lord's table on that account, but draw nigh with our habitual trust and meetness in Christ Jesus. No mere bodily austerity like that of receiving the elements fasting—no formal reading of some manual of a week's preparation, to be laid aside that we may rush again into the world as soon as we have communed, will make us meet to come. No holding of the elements in superstitious reverence, as if to touch them save with crossed hands and lowly prostration, or to let a drop or crumb of them fall, were profanation, constitutes readiness to partake. The sacrament is indeed called a mystery; but that means in Scripture, and in the old English, a thing understood only by the initiated, not some dark matter where we may inadvertently stumble,

to our destruction, into sacrilegious profanation of holy rites. There is no other mystery in the Lord's Supper than in prayer; and the frame in which to commune is none other than that which every where becomes us in the immediate presence of the King of Kings. Our spirit should be that of a child approaching with filial confidence to a father's board, remembering, however, that he is the Father of an Infinite Majesty. If we communicate intelligently, we can hardly fail of doing it reverently. We shall feel that no mere formal preparation can satisfy us in coming to such a feast; but that faith, penitence, charity, and every Christian grace must be in lively exercise in the soul that would feed upon Christ by faith with thanksgiving. As a general rule, a longing desire to participate is evidence of meetness to participate, and is the state to which we should aim to bring ourselves in view of the Communion, for such hungering and thirsting souls will be filled; though it does not follow, that because our hearts happen to be cold and dead, the sacrament and its blessings are not for us. And, above all, let us remember that the great requisite is the wedding garment, the all-sufficient righteousness of Christ. His atoning and sanctifying work constitute our title and our meetness for the feast. Enrobed in these, when the great King comes in to see the guests, it will be with no stern inquiry, How camest thou in hither?—but saying, Eat, O friends; drink—yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.

## SERMON XI.

## KEEPING THE COMMANDMENTS.

“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.”—  
*St. John xv. 14.*

**T**HE last question in the Baptismal service is, Wilt thou, then, obediently keep God’s holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of thy life? To which the answer is, I will, by God’s help.

This question and answer have been reserved unto the present place, because Baptism, Confirmation, and the Lord’s Supper equally require the same holy obedience; and having considered those several ways of confessing Christ, we now fitly dwell upon the godly living by which the profession made in them should be followed and adorned.

It will be seen that these answers in the Baptismal service are very comprehensive, including Repentance, Faith, and Obedience—Regeneration, Justification, and Sanctification—teaching our dependence on God’s grace, and, in short, containing an epitome of every essential requisite of the Christian life. The order of their arrangement is also admirable. First, is placed repentance for sin and utter renunciation of it; then faith, for we cannot look to Christ but as we look away from sin; next, baptism, for if penitent and believing we are prepared to confess Christ in his sacraments; and

lastly, obedience, for those who have named the name of Christ should depart from all iniquity, and be careful to maintain good works.

Our subject now will be, the keeping of God's holy will and commandments.

1. In our text, and elsewhere in the word of God, obedience is ever made the test of discipleship. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings. No one, in the face of such assertions, can hope to be acknowledged as the friend and disciple of Jesus, whilst wilfully and habitually disobeying the least of his requirements. Faith may as evidently be known by good works, as the tree is known by its fruit. The first saving knowledge of Christ prompts the inquiry, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? and ever after the feeling of the believer's heart is, There is not a command of my God but that I desire to keep to my life's end.

2. But let us notice more particularly some of the characteristics of Christian obedience.

It is not rendered in a legal spirit, or in other words, the Christian does not obey to merit or purchase salvation. He works not for grace, but from grace. Two gross and opposite errors have prevailed in all ages upon this subject. One class magnify faith, as if, so they do but believe on Christ, it matters little how they live; the other seek to live very strictly, as if to merit heaven by their obedience, and actually rely upon it for salvation, however they may formally profess to trust in Christ. The one are

called Antinomians, the other Legalists, and both are wrong. To neglect good works, or to rely upon them, equally proves that we have no true faith. The proper spirit is, to do all that God commands as earnestly as if our whole salvation depended on doing it, but at the same time to rely as entirely on the merits of the Saviour, as if we had done nothing. Let us examine ourselves carefully upon this point. Do we abhor the idea of expecting to be saved by a faith in Christ which yet is not evidenced by a holy life? And do we equally abhor a self-righteous spirit, so that after our best services, instead of indulging a self-complacent delight in them, we turn away from all, and look to Christ only for acceptance? The more eminent in obedience any become, the more self-renouncing and dependent on Christ's merits will they be. Let us not say, therefore, that we will keep God's will and commandments, as if that were to make us his, but only to prove that we are his. And whenever any self-satisfied feeling arise in view of duties performed, let us loathe it, exclaiming—What am I at the best, but a miserable sinner! What do I, but through grace received!

“Simply to thy cross I cling.”

3. Another mark of true Christian obedience is that it springs from love.

Faith worketh by love, and purifies the heart. A Christian is not like a slave doing task-work under the lash. He does not say within himself, I must do this or I shall be damned,—I must go through with such an amount of praying and reading God's word—must

engage so far in spreading the Gospel, and bestow so much in charity, because all this is expected of me as a Christian, and I can appease my conscience on no easier terms. He does not treat his conscience as a thief does the dog, to which he gives a sop, not from any good will, but to be permitted to pass by unmolested. Love is the spring and principle of his obedience. If there were no punishment for disobedience, he would still obey. God's law is written in his heart. He feels such gratitude to his Saviour, and sees such beauty in holiness, that he is constrained to yield himself a living sacrifice to God and drawn to his service. Why does he go to his place of secret prayer? Because he loves to commune with God. Why read God's Word, frequent his house, or engage in labors of charity? Because he delights therein. His meat is to do the will of God. Let him but for one week have no Bible, no season of secret prayer, no Sabbath worship, no work of charity, it would be the darkest week of his life. He would be restless, dissatisfied, and unhappy, and no worldly success or pleasure during that same week could gild its dreary hours, or at all compensate for the loss of his religious joys. Is it so with us? Has the keeping of God's commandments become an essential part of our enjoyments so that we are out of our element when they are neglected? If so, we have here another proof, that ours is a true spirit of obedience.

4. A further characteristic of an obedient spirit is, that it has respect to all God's laws.

Ye are my friends, if ye do *whatsoever* I command

you. Many are ready to render a partial obedience. I am very particular, one will assert, with regard to the Sabbath and public worship, as much so, as any Christian. But do you also go, we ask, to the Lord's table? and the answer may be, I do not. Or another will say, I am as far from all profanity as any man. But do you pray in secret, or in your family? No, or not often, is the reply. Now these persons have a persuasion that what they do entitles them so far to the Christian name, forgetting that whosoever shall offend in one point of the law, is guilty of all. According to the Scriptures, the man who habitually and wilfully neglects one known command of God, is not a Christian, even though, if such a thing were possible, he should keep every other. We do not affirm that he who keeps a part is in no better position than he who violates the whole. One length of fence thrown down may leave your harvest to be trampled just as much as if the whole were down, yet with but one length prostrate, that fence would be more easily mended than if all were levelled. Thus the moral man, while he neglects a single duty to God, is no more a Christian, than if he had neglected all duties; but still, it is an advantage to him to be moral, to be an observer of the Sabbath, and to go so far as he does in a religious life, because, like the one gap in the inclosure, his omissions are the more easily supplied. God forbid that we should place the religiously educated, the Church going, and the outwardly correct, upon a level with the openly reprobate. Still, however, true piety has respect to all God's commandments, and he that

is unfaithful in that which is least, is unfaithful also in much. Try yourselves, then, on this point. Is there a requirement of God which you habitually disregard? And take those points for self-scrutiny, in which, from natural temperament or other causes, you are most likely to fail. Your disposition may lead you to love the world's gay pleasures. Can you obey God there, and renounce them? Your education may have taught you to abhor profanity and to keep the Sabbath, but can you go also to the Lord's table, or war against besetting sins? If a ship were sound in every timber save one leaky spot, you would not walk her deck safely, nor glance over her proudly, forgetting that single defect. You would not think much of your child's obedience, if he went when it suited him, and refused when it did not. Give God what you require in your own child, and you may then take upon you the Sacramental vow.

5. But though perfect in kind, we must remark further, that Christian obedience is never, in this world, perfect in degree.

If we did not add this, some might be discouraged at the description already drawn, or doubt its truth. They might turn upon the Christian and ask, Do you profess to have attained to such a height and perfectness of obedience? Do you always love to obey God? Do you ever find this delight in his service? Our frank confession would be, We do not. But look at the apple in its several stages of growth. It is an apple when green, for it has the seed, the shape, and the other characteristics of an apple, but it is very im-



perfect. Yet it goes on, drawing into itself more and more of the juices of the perfect fruit, and expelling from itself the bitterness of the imperfect, until in its full ripeness it is ready for the master's use. So is it with the Christian. From the beginning of his religious life he has within him all the rudiments of a true Christian, though in great imperfection. As he advances, however, more and more of the character of a true child of God appears through a progressive sanctification of the word and the Spirit, until a high degree of ripeness in Christ is attained. Let it comfort us if we can hope that we are Christians, though defective, and let us feel it our duty to go on unto perfection.

6. This leads to another remark, viz., that to aim at the highest standard of holiness, is the spirit of a true child of God.

What a sad mistake do those make, who would be Christians, yet not so decidedly but that they may retain much of the world !

Christ is called a Shepherd, and the sheep that keep nearest the shepherd have the best of the pasture, for those in the front ranks crop it before it has been trampled by others. The foremost, too, are least likely to stray, because immediately under their guardian's eye, as well as least likely to be destroyed by wolves, for they have the protection of his crook. It is the Christian who follows Christ afar off, willing to go with the mass, or to be with the stragglers on the outskirts of the flock, who is insecure and exposed to danger. To keep close to the Saviour in the way

of his commandments and in the steps of his most holy life, is to be where his looks of love will ever beam upon the soul, and where Satan cannot venture, or will be powerless to destroy. Never was there a happy Christian who was not ever panting after perfect conformity with the will of his Divine Master,—perfect likeness to his glorious image.

Such is Christian obedience. But how utterly powerless are we to render it except through Divine grace assisting us ! Nor do we ever feel our weakness more than when thinking of a public confession of Christ. The undertaking appears so great,—the vows of his professed people so solemn,—the guilt and evil influence of their inconsistency so awful,—the sin of backsliding so fatal,—that many pause upon the verge of a religious profession, wishing, but fearing to make it. Does the narrow way grow any broader by delay, or is there any likelihood that Christ will smooth it in years to come ? Will he ever take off the cross, permitting you to go to heaven as the only one not called to bear it, or would you wish so to meet him there who bore the cross for you ? We grant that our own strength is perfect weakness, and looking to that alone we may well be afraid, but the answer in our Baptismal service shows us our refuge and strength. I will by God's help. That is the perfection of Christian resolve. I will, alone, would be an empty boast. God's help, alone, is never to be looked for. But I will, by God's help, will carry us over the roughest, hardest pathway to heaven. Let the two be united, and you need not fear.

Why then delay? You see plain duties to God which you are daily neglecting. Conscience and the Holy Spirit continually prompt you to say, I know these things should be attended to—I know that I ought to be a decided Christian—I know that I commit a great sin in turning away from the opportunities of confessing Christ, and I often do it with a heavy heart. Why then delay? Why act like that demoniac who cried out with pain, and yet kept on cutting himself with stones? Let the Saviour restore you after these years of anguish to your right mind, and clothe you with his righteousness, and be you found sitting henceforth at his feet, or following him in the way, or telling how great things he hath done for you. Every day, by neglect of this, you are losing the light of his countenance, the joys of his Spirit, and endangering your hopes of heaven. The decided endeavor to take up known duties draws down the strength needed for their performance. And the act of sacramental confession, especially, is often so blessed. As the ocean may be filled with the materials of islands which float in endless tossings till they moor themselves upon some spot, when they speedily increase and become the abodes of fertility and loveliness, of stability and peace; so the mind is often confused with doubts and anxieties till Christ is fastened upon by a faith of the heart confessed with the mouth, and then around that one point, fears subside, and joy and quietude find a resting-place. Creatures of procrastination, driven of the wind and tossed, we need some deciding act in which we can say,

“Here rest, my oft-divided heart;”

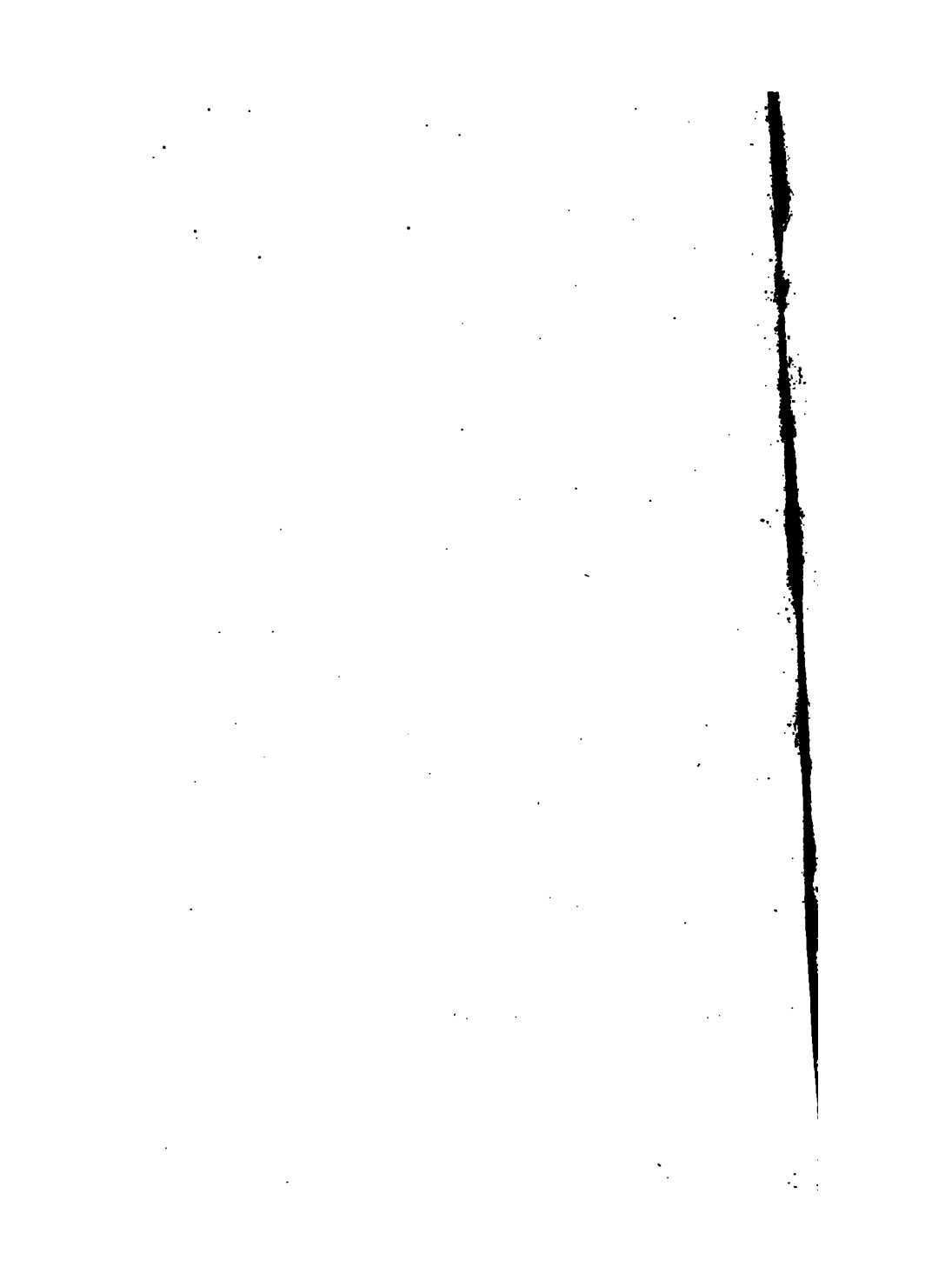
and in either of the modes of a public confession of Christ, upon which we have dwelt, we find what we want. Give, therefore, an upward look to the God of all grace, and then when the appeal is made to you, Wilt thou be baptized? wilt thou confirm thy baptismal vow? or wilt thou come to the table of thy Lord? answer humbly, but firmly, I will; by God's help; and by the same help, having made that confession, I will in every other point obediently keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of my life.

Thus has the great duty of a public confession of Christ been presented to you. There is danger, we allow, in a false profession, for it is taking privileges to ourselves that do not belong to us, and one who has made it is apt to settle down into a fatal confidence and peace from which nothing but the trump of the archangel can arouse him. It is your duty, if you would guard against it, faithfully to examine yourself, and so come forward in a confession of Christ. No minister or Christian friend can judge for you of the sincerity of your piety. The opinion of others for or against it is a matter of little consequence; man looketh upon the outward appearance, but God looketh upon the heart; and there it is your privilege and duty also to look, and to judge as God judgeth. If there seem to be something yet wanting in you ere you can make the profession, seek at once, by prayer and every other means, to gain it. If there be some hope of your acceptance with God, though not as clear as you would wish, pray that it may be brightened, and then go forward in the way of duty.

In no case whatever, and by no possible plea, can you excuse your neglect to confess Christ before men : may you never, by any means, lose the glorious reward of being confessed by him before his Father and the angels of God !

THE END.









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